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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Plantsmen's gardens

Beautiful planting, mesmerising spaces

3 inspiring ideas for early summer pots

Head gardener Troy Scott Smith chooses the best *Iris sibirica*

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A painterly garden designed with sustainability in mind

How to use alpines

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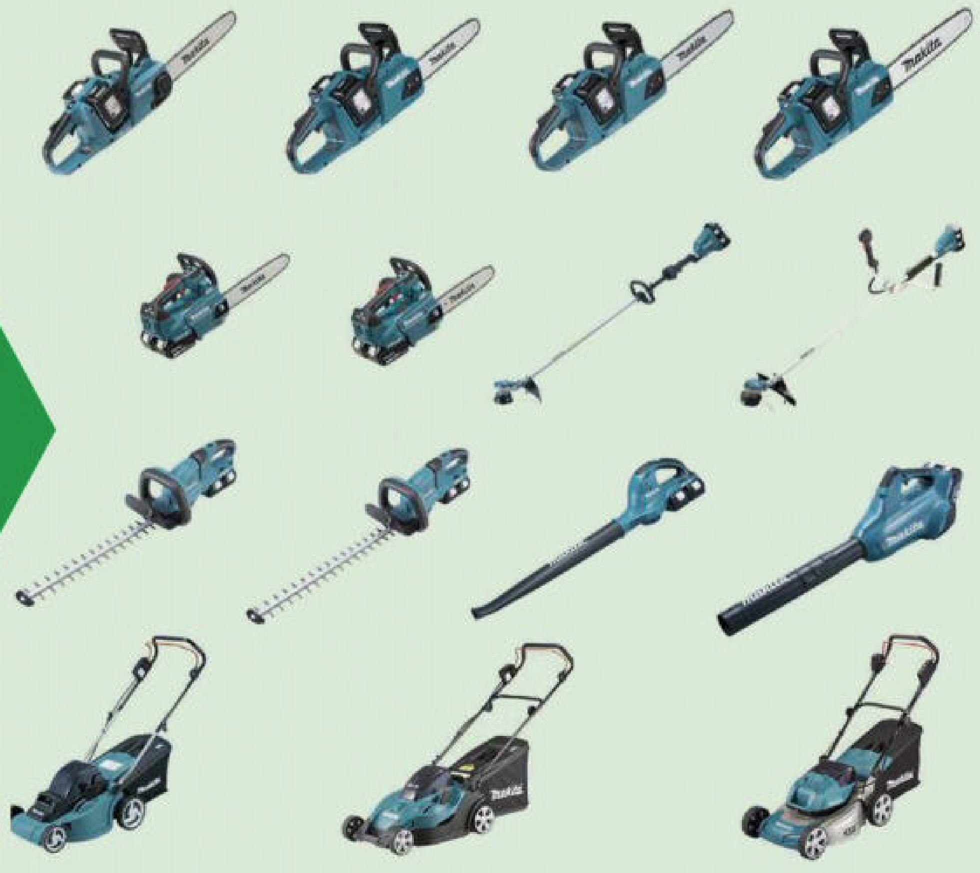

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Editor's letter

This issue of *Gardens Illustrated* celebrates eco-luxe planting and garden design. Perched on sloping ground above a wooded valley in the midst of the Cornish countryside, the garden at the Old Rectory has been designed by Conrad Batten with sustainability in mind. The planting; a fusion of wildflowers, edibles and ornamentals, such as roses and poppies, is rhythmic, free-flowing and adventurous. It treads lightly, pushing established limits of plant hardiness and planting design.

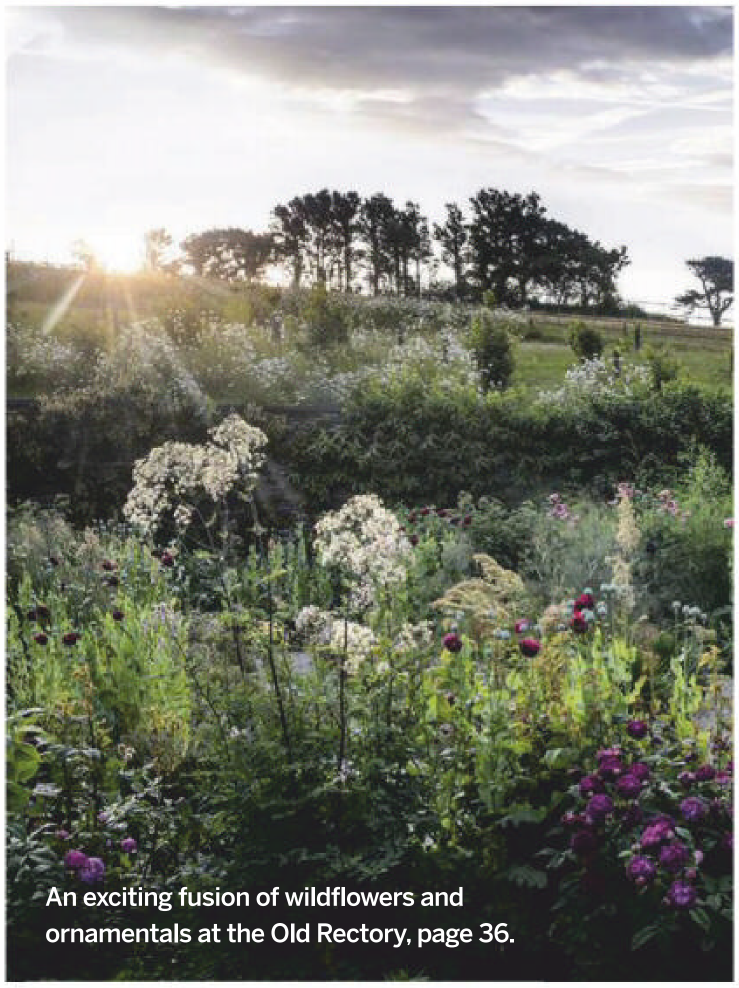
In Kent, the immersive plantsman's garden around a small, black-painted house takes its cue from Henry David Thoreau's quest for self-sufficiency during a two-year sojourn in a cabin in the woods at Walden Pond in Massachusetts. Its gardener, Andy Salter, has been inspired in part by time spend working at Great Dixter in Sussex. Trees, shrubs, perennials, bulbs and annuals grow cheek by jowl in a dynamic and colourful space.

Troy Scott Smith, head gardener at Iford Manor in Wiltshire, chooses the best Siberian irises, to grow for brief but glorious flowering. Pre-1960s cultivars are narrower of form and more delicate in flower, and tend to flower late. Recent breeding has intensified their boldness and colour palette.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR



JASON INGRAM

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DIANNA JAZWINSKI

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- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 20
- Get free UK p&p when you order the new *A Year in the Edible Garden* special edition – page 123
- Save 10% with free p&p on plant orders at Sarah Raven† – page 127
- Special offer on strawberry plants from Pomona Fruits† – page 129

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RACHEL WARNE

Troy Scott Smith
Troy recommends the best Siberian irises, page 56. *"As the shooting star of the garden or in a supporting act, there is a Siberian iris for everyone and for every garden."*

Annie Gatti
Annie travels to Connemara to meet Irish basket maker and artist Joe Hogan, page 86. *"It was such a privilege to see how the craft of basket weaving has become an art form in Joe Hogan's hands."*

Lisa Linder
Lisa photographs Joe Hogan for our feature, page 86. *"Such a kind man, inspired by his stunning surroundings. Even in torrential rain, you could not help but love Loch Na Fooey's beauty."*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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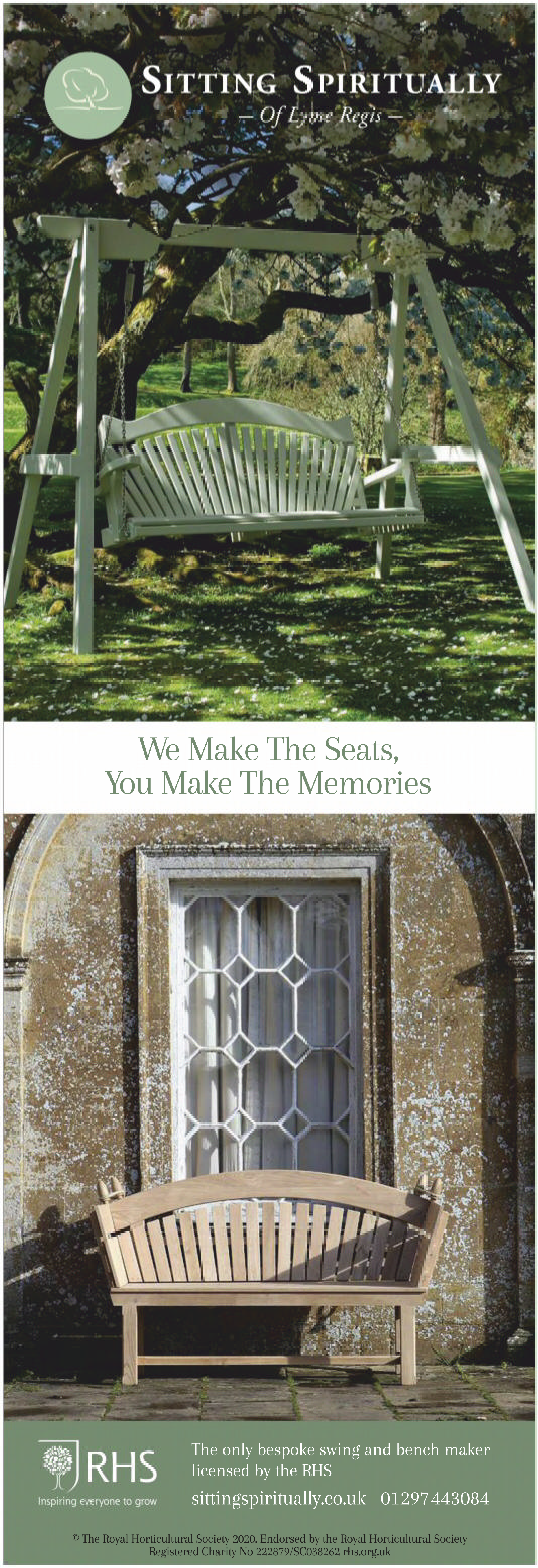
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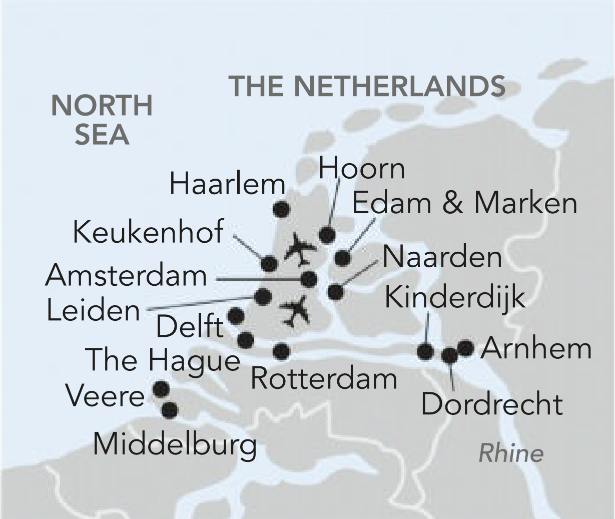

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Day 2 Keukenhof Gardens. After breakfast we will drive from Amsterdam to the Keukenhof Gardens for a morning in this extraordinary horticultural heaven. With 32 hectares of flowers, more than seven million bulbs in bloom and 800 varieties of tulips, this is a truly unique and unforgettable experience. We will return to the MS Royal Crown for a late lunch followed by an afternoon at leisure in Amsterdam. Moor overnight in Amsterdam.

Day 3 Naarden & Amsterdam. This morning we will depart for the ancient fortified town of Naarden, one of the best- preserved in Europe with a fascinating history. On arrival enjoy a walking tour, followed by some free time. After lunch on board, the afternoon is at leisure to either explore independently or join the included tour to the Rijksmuseum which boasts works by Vermeer, Goya, and Rubens.

Day 4 Haarlem. After breakfast, depart for a morning walking tour of Haarlem, including the Windmill de Adriaan. Our tour concludes with a visit to the Frans Hals Museum, home to a spectacular display of 16th and 17th century portraits, still lifes and landscapes. Return to the MS Royal Crown for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at leisure.

Day 5 Hoorn, Edam & Marken. This morning we will take a walking tour of the beautiful 16th century town of Hoorn and after lunch on board we will visit two unique communities of the Zuider Zee. Our first call will be at Edam, a tranquil little town with drawbridges across canals and charming historic houses with lovely facades. Continue on to the fascinating village of Marken which was separated from the mainland after a storm surge in the 13th century.

Day 6 Arnhem. Arrive this morning into Arnhem. After breakfast on board join an excursion to visit the memorable Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein'; this renovated building houses the world's largest collection of militaria from Operation Market Garden. Alternatively, you may like to visit the private art collection at the Kroller Muller Museum with its late 19th and 20th century paintings. Return to the MS Royal Crown for lunch and enjoy a leisurely afternoon in Arnhem or you may like to join the included visit to the unique Middachten Castle & Gardens.

Day 7 Dordrecht & Kinderdijk. Enjoy a relaxing morning cruise as we head towards Dordrecht. After lunch on board there will be an excursion to see the nearby marvellous Windmills of Kinderdijk, of which there are 19 in total, dating from 1740. The remainder of the day is free to explore Dordrecht with its old-world atmosphere and quaint shops, cottages and canals. Sail on towards Veere this evening.

Day 8 Veere & Middelburg. Today we explore Southern Zeeland, starting in the 13th century town of Veere. Formerly a seaport but now within a lake due to the Delta works carried out in the 1960s, it is a charming place with well-preserved houses and a marina. Enjoy free time here to explore at your own pace. Return to the ship and sail on to the lovingly restored Medieval town of Middelburg where we will enjoy an afternoon guided walking tour.

Day 9 Delft & The Hague. From Rotterdam we depart for a full day tour. Our first stop will be Delft, birthplace of Vermeer. Here we enjoy a walking tour of the pretty town, followed by lunch and a visit to the Delft Blue Pottery. Afterwards, we continue to The Hague for a visit to the beautiful Mauritshuis Museum with its marvellous collection of Dutch Golden Age paintings.

Day 10 Leiden. After breakfast we depart for the vibrant city of Leiden, a treasure trove of narrow streets and canals, lined with beautiful 17th century buildings, including ancient alms houses. On our walking tour we will see the old harbour, Beestenmarkt square and the charming Weddesteeg, where the world-famous painter Rembrandt was born. We continue with a visit to the Hortus Botanicus, the oldest botanical garden in the Netherlands.

Day 11 Amsterdam to London/ Bristol or Edinburgh. Disembark after breakfast and return to the UK by scheduled flight or travel by Eurostar to London St Pancras.

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Dig in

What's happening, what's in flower and what to buy this month

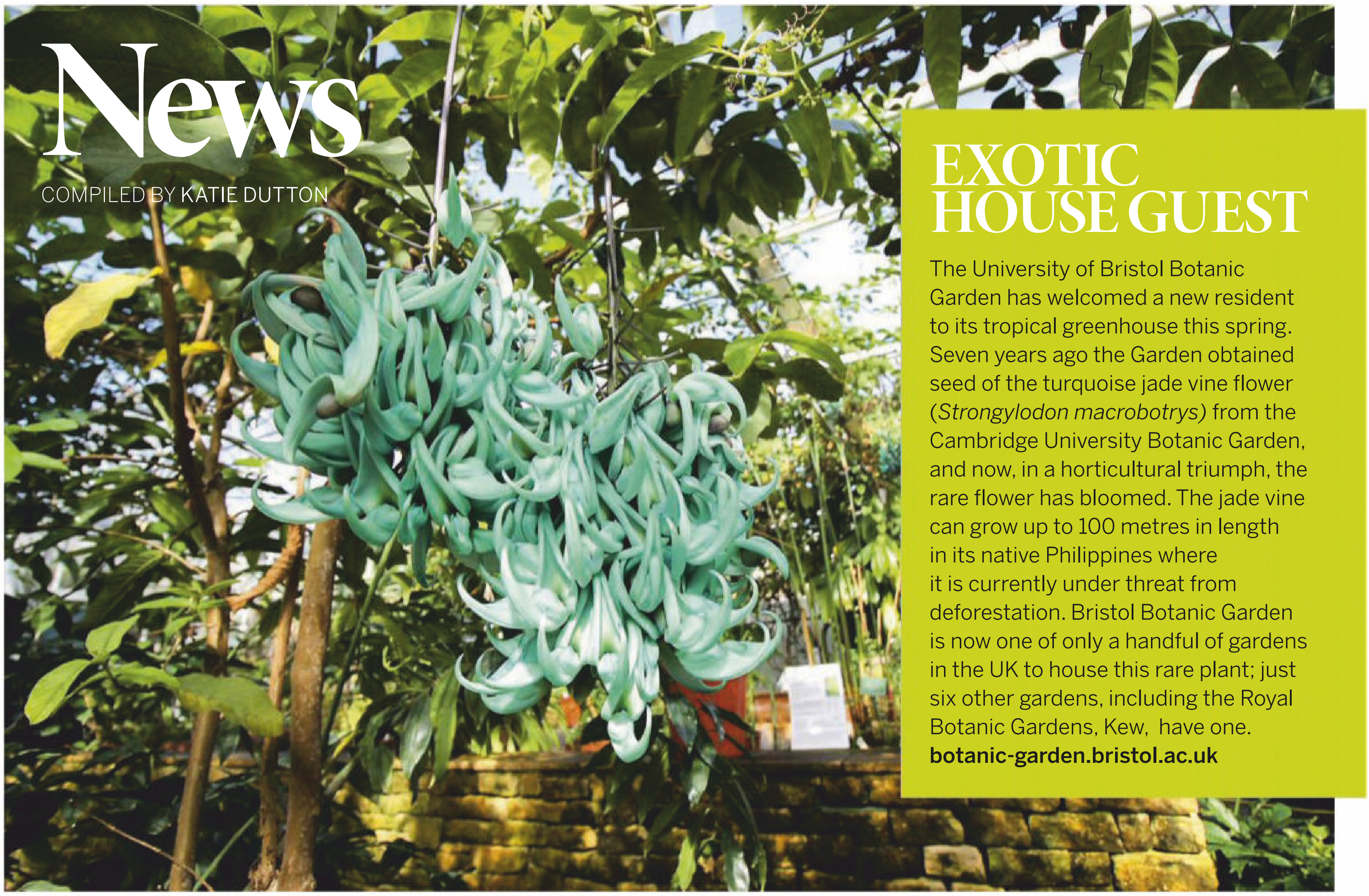
Near from afar

Even though we haven't been able to visit gardens this spring, thanks to a multitude of virtual tours online, we've still been able to get a garden fix from the comfort of our own homes. Among the many gardens now offering tours online are the Royal Gardens at Highgrove, where through 360-degree mapping, you can take a virtual wander along The Thyme Walk (pictured), The Laurel Tunnel, The Wildflower Meadow and more. Many other gardens, including he National Trust's Hidcote, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, RHS Garden Wisley and Birmingham Botanical Gardens are also offering online tour experiences. To find more virtual garden tours to online, visit **gardensillustrated.com/virtual-garden-tours**

JASON INGRAM

News

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON



ANDY WINFIELD

EXOTIC HOUSE GUEST

The University of Bristol Botanic Garden has welcomed a new resident to its tropical greenhouse this spring. Seven years ago the Garden obtained seed of the turquoise jade vine flower (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*) from the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, and now, in a horticultural triumph, the rare flower has bloomed. The jade vine can grow up to 100 metres in length in its native Philippines where it is currently under threat from deforestation. Bristol Botanic Garden is now one of only a handful of gardens in the UK to house this rare plant; just six other gardens, including the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, have one. **botanic-garden.bristol.ac.uk**

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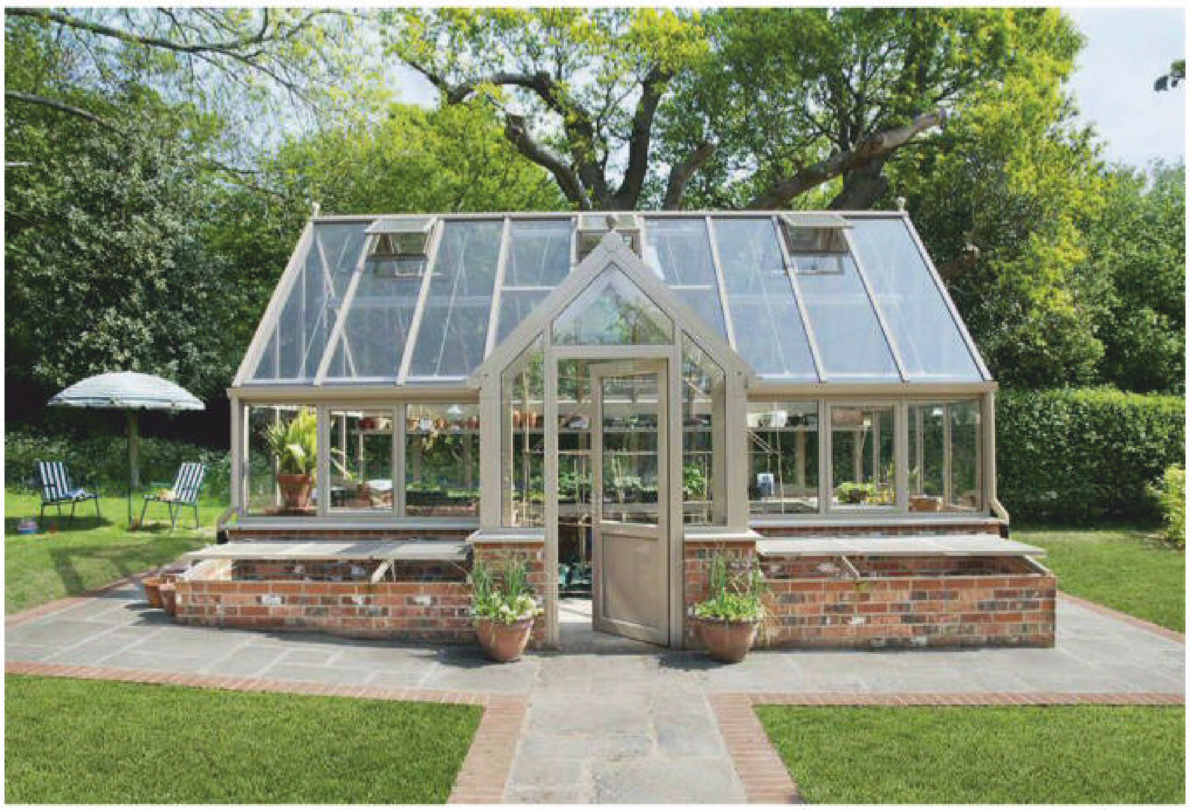

Space to grow

Over the past few years greenhouses have become increasingly minimalist in their design, but for those who still hanker after something a little more traditional, historic glasshouse and greenhouse manufacturer Hartley Botanic is offering the new, bespoke Opus Grand Botanic Glasshouse. Part of its Modern Horticulture range, with cleaner lines and larger windows, the Opus Grand Botanic Glasshouse has the style of a Victorian timber-framed glasshouse design but with the advantages of contemporary materials and engineering. Available in a range of colours, all of Hartley Botanic's Glasshouses and Greenhouses are handmade, bespoke and made to order. **Tel 01457 819155, hartley-botanic.co.uk**

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JAZZ IT UP

Grown by peony specialist Primrose Hall, new *Paeonia* All That Jazz plants are now available in the UK, ready for planting in the garden. All That Jazz is a beautiful addition to the Itoh selection of peonies, with finely cut foliage and large, blousy, double flowers in apricot flecked with burgundy, and a light fragrance. Itoh peonies are a cross between herbaceous and tree peonies, resulting in plants that offer masses of blooms that flower for a longer period than herbaceous peonies. A plant in a 5.5-litre pot costs £89. **primrosehallpeonies.co.uk**

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Here's a new take on grow your own; Silly Green posts out boxes of pre-germinated micro greens for you to grow on at home – allowing you to enjoy the fresh and intense flavours of herb seedlings as they burst into leaf. Founder Ed Hall hit on the idea as a way to offer everyone the option of growing food at home, no matter how little space they have. The seedlings arrive as a selection of three different types to water and watch grow. Flavours include basil, chive and rocket, alongside less-often grown flavours such as red amaranth, wasabi, nasturtium and fenugreek. Sign up for deliveries from weekly to every six weeks, at £4 per box. **sillygreens.com**

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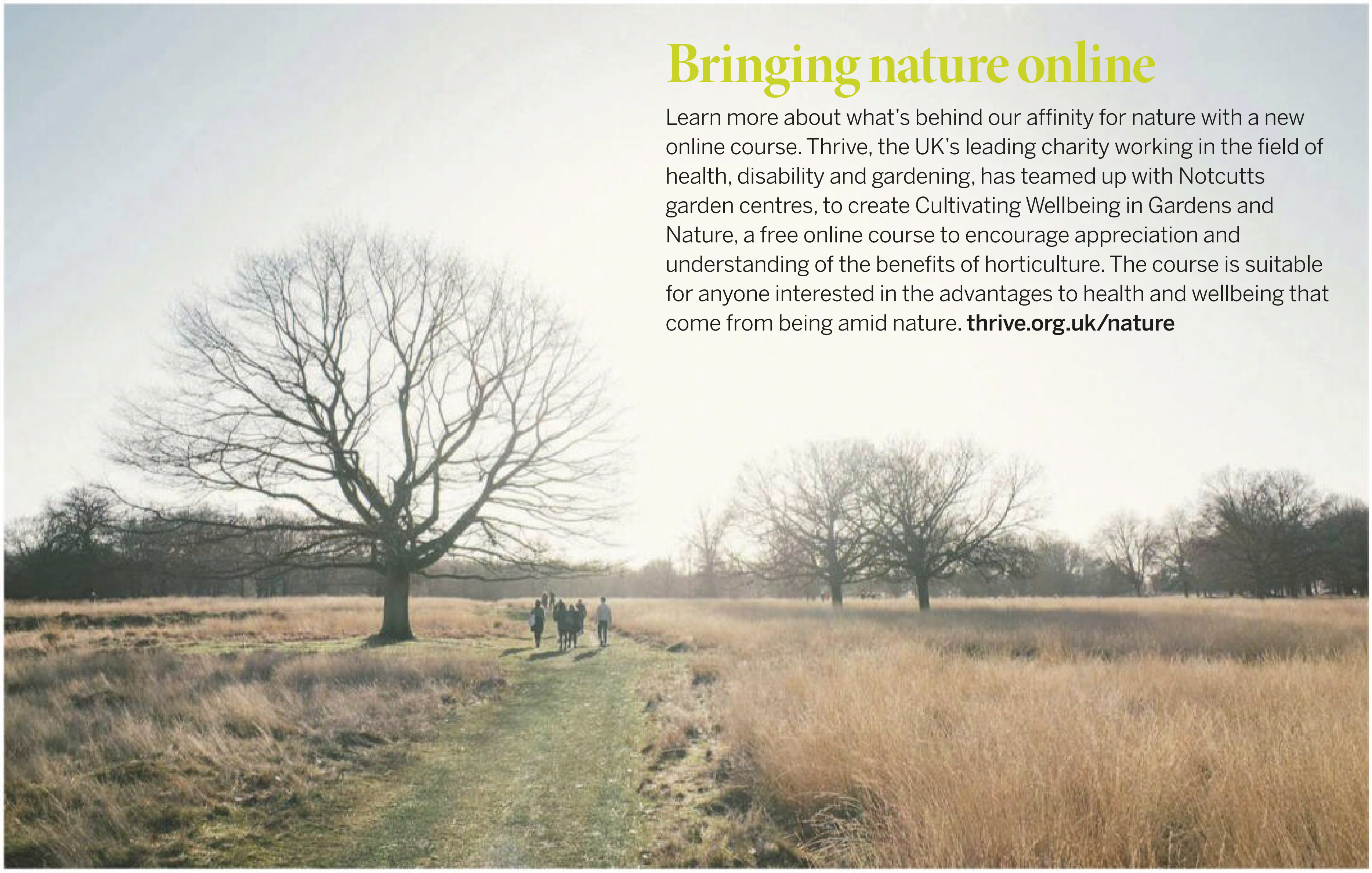


Bringing nature online

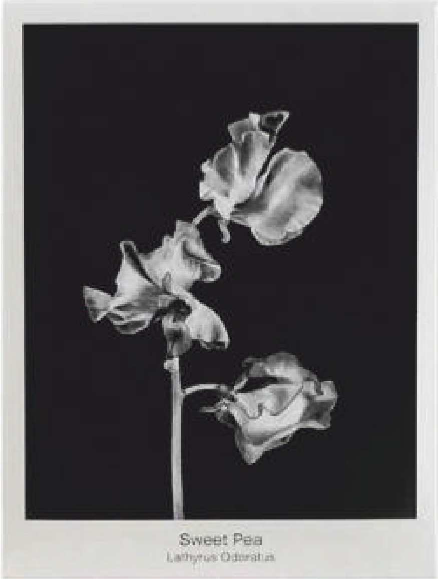
Learn more about what's behind our affinity for nature with a new online course. Thrive, the UK's leading charity working in the field of health, disability and gardening, has teamed up with Notcutts garden centres, to create Cultivating Wellbeing in Gardens and Nature, a free online course to encourage appreciation and understanding of the benefits of horticulture. The course is suitable for anyone interested in the advantages to health and wellbeing that come from being amid nature. **thrive.org.uk/nature**

HERBAL MEDICINE

An unique, historical, herb collection, which offers a rare insight into 18th-century medicine, joins eight new National Plant Collections accredited by Plant Heritage this month. Dr Darwin's Medicine Chest is a collection of 40 herbal plants referenced in the writings of Dr Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles) that are grown in the gardens at Erasmus Darwin House in Lichfield, Staffordshire, and would have been used in the 18th century by physicians, such as Dr Darwin, Among the collection are *Cnicus benedictus* (pictured, right), known as blessed thistle and used to encourage an appetite; *Charybdis maritima*, known as sea squill and believed to relieve water retention; and *Althaea officinalis* otherwise known as marsh mallow and reputedly beneficial for coughs and colds. Find out more about the collection at **plantheritage.org.uk**

M STANDING

3 FOR THE GARDEN… *ART AND SEED COLLABORATIONS*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Lathyrus Odoratus

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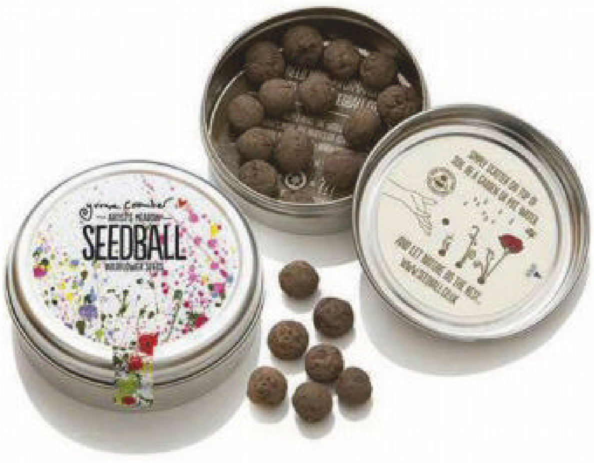
Sweet Pea Seed Packet (designed by Graen Studios, inspired by Karl Blossfeldt's *Art Forms in Nature*), £4.50, shop.tate.org.uk



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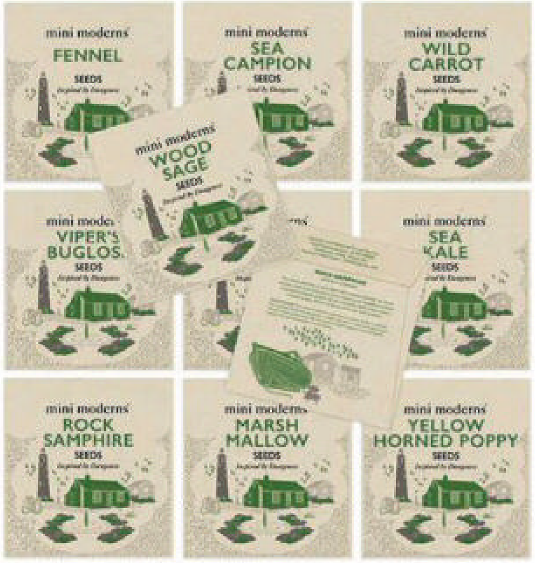
Artist's Meadow Mix (collaboration of Seedball and Yvonne Coomber, sales of which will raise funds for the Wildlife Trust), £6, seedball.co.uk


mini moderns FENNEL SEEDS
mini moderns SEA CAMPION SEEDS
mini moderns WILD CARROT SEEDS
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VIPER'S BUGLOSS SEEDS
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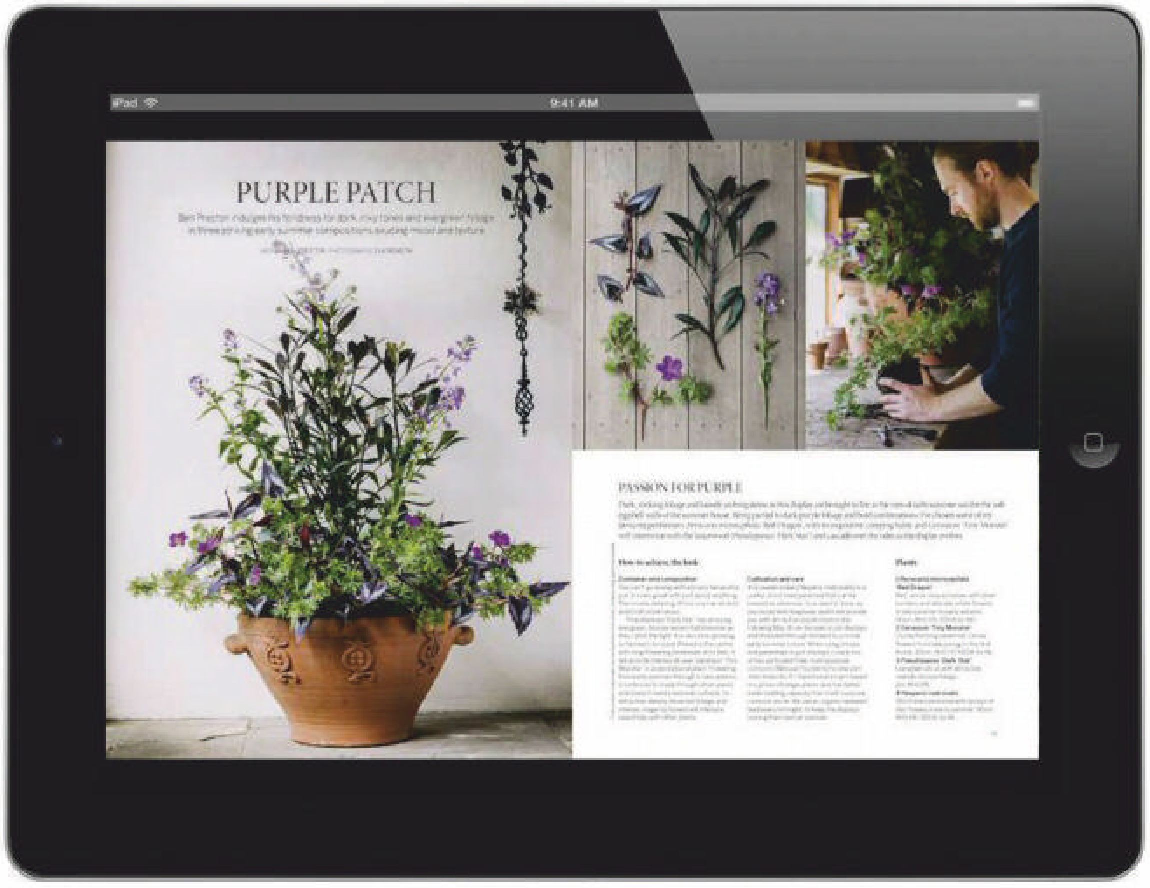
KITTED OUT for working in the garden

May plants

Made in design


PURPLE PATCH

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Essentials for working in the garden

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

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MAIN IMAGE (THIS PAGE AND OVERLEAF) BY STEVE SAYERS

2

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5

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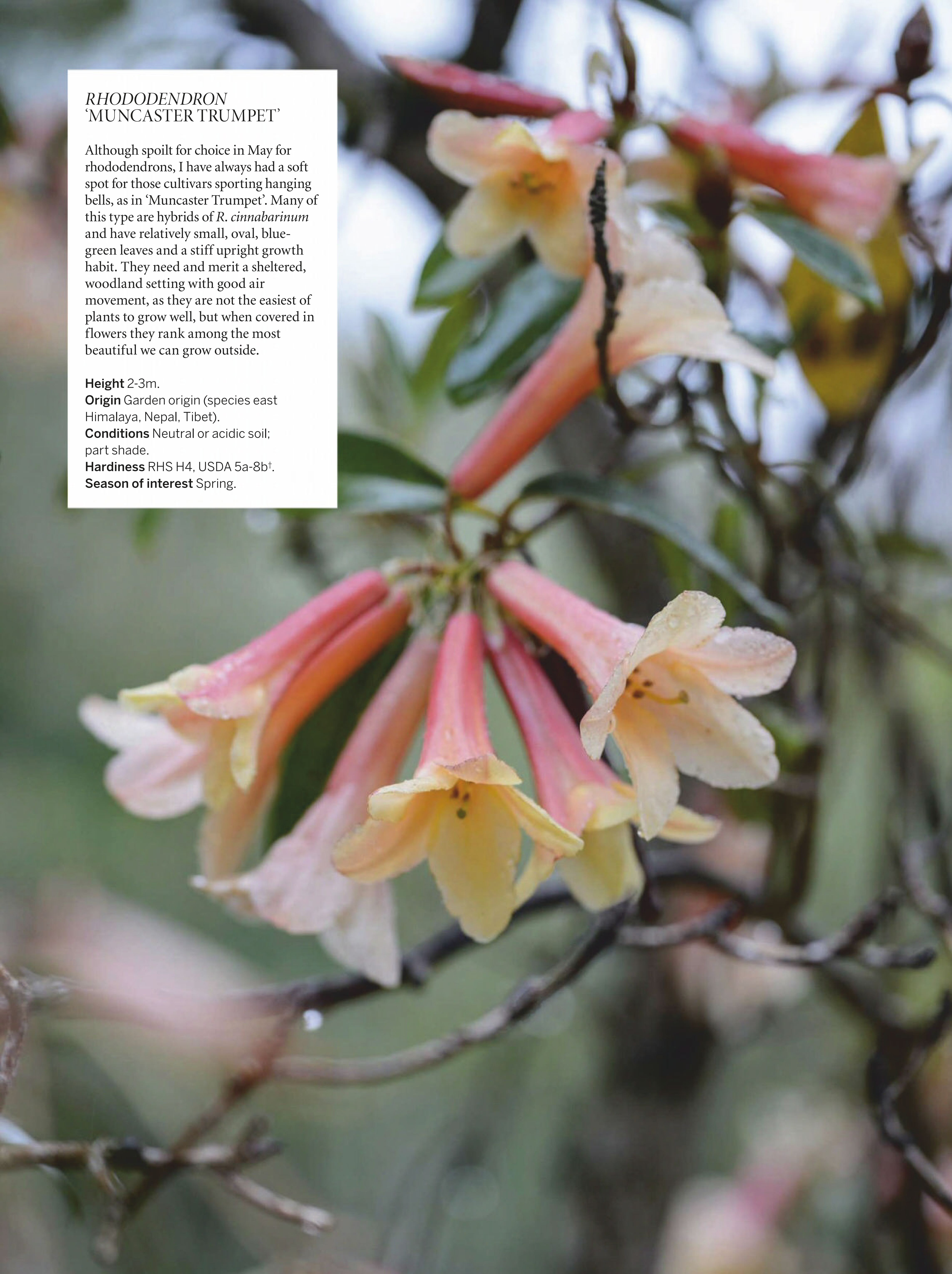
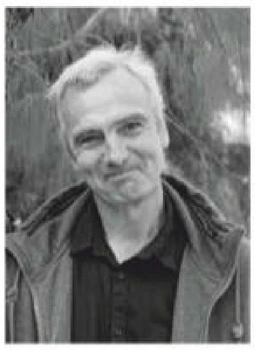


RHODODENDRON 'MUNCASTER TRUMPET'

Although spoilt for choice in May for rhododendrons, I have always had a soft spot for those cultivars sporting hanging bells, as in 'Muncaster Trumpet'. Many of this type are hybrids of *R. cinnabarinum* and have relatively small, oval, blue-green leaves and a stiff upright growth habit. They need and merit a sheltered, woodland setting with good air movement, as they are not the easiest of plants to grow well, but when covered in flowers they rank among the most beautiful we can grow outside.

Height 2-3m.
Origin Garden origin (species east Himalaya, Nepal, Tibet).
Conditions Neutral or acidic soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-8b†.
Season of interest Spring.



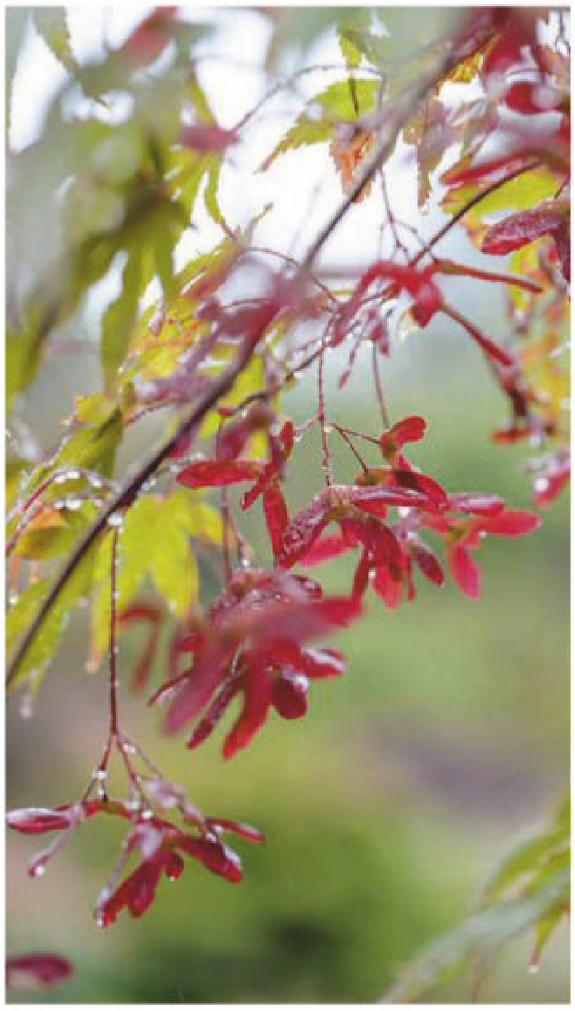
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Keith Wiley
runs Wildside
nursery in Devon
wileyatwildside.com

May plants

As the days and soil gets warmer, Keith's choice include colour, from a bright-orange lily to a crimson rose, offset by the delicacy of a soft-pink viburnum

WORDS **KEITH WILEY** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



ACER PALMATUM 'MATSUKAZE'

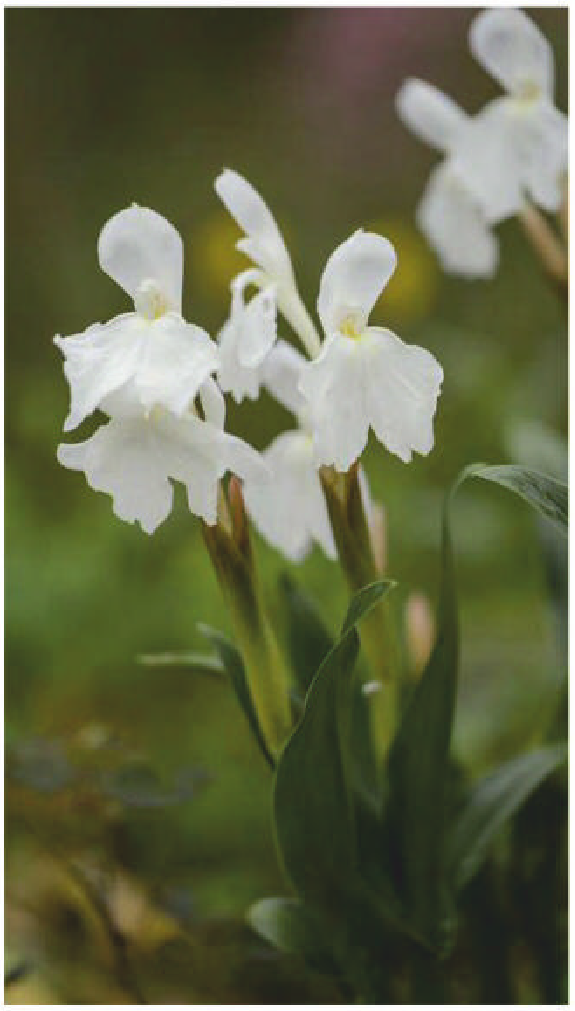
This Japanese maple is truly multi-seasonal in its attributes. Its leaves emerge in spring a rich, bronze to red colour that very gradually fades to green by mid-summer before exiting in the autumn in glorious scarlet before they fall. These colour changes are by their very nature short-lived, so the display of crimson-red seedheads, which appear soon after leaf emergence and can last for months, if frosts haven't spoilt the flowers, is eye-catching and very welcome. It is very similar to *A. palmatum* 'Chitose-yama'.

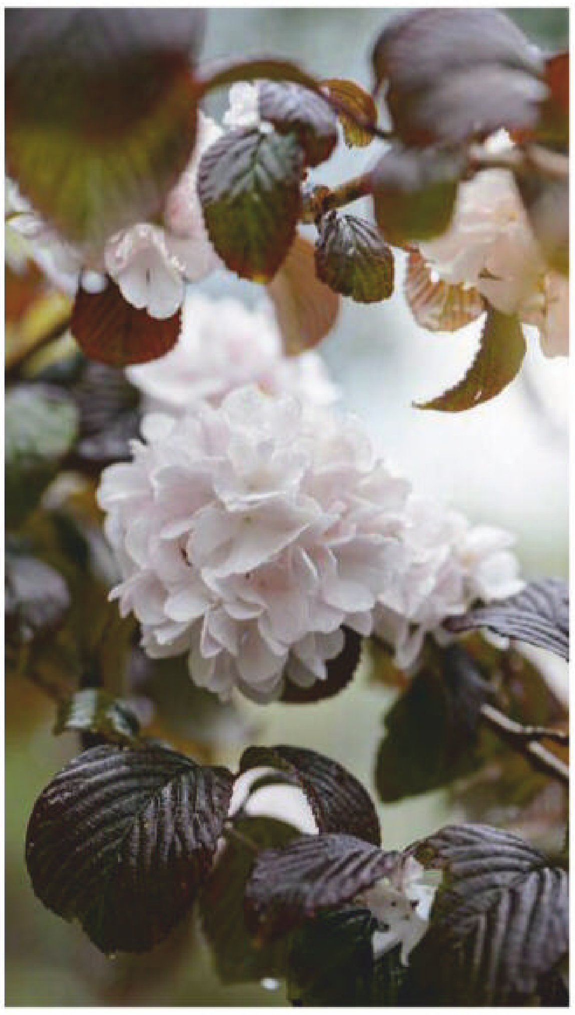
Height 2-3m (3-4m wide).
Origin Garden origin (species Japan).
Conditions Well-drained, good soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Year round; spring to summer for seeds.

ROSCOEA 'ICE MAIDEN'

Roscoeas, members of the ginger family, are hardy, tuberous-rooted perennials that can be in flower from April right through to September. Pure white ones, such as this, are fairly thin on the ground at any time of the year. This cultivar, one of the earliest of the roscoeas to flower each year, is a seedling selection by Irish plantsman, Gary Dunlop that has pristine pure-white *Roscoea humeana* f. *alba* in its DNA. Unlike the straight species, it is easy to grow, and seems to have very few foibles. The pale yellow in the flower centre is extremely distinctive.

Height 30-45cm.
Origin Garden origin (species China).
Conditions Well-drained, humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.
Season of interest Spring.





VIBURNUM PLICATUM F.*PLICATUM* 'ROSACE'

I remember the day I first saw this plant in full flower in a garden as clearly as if it were yesterday. The plant I saw was about 2m high with crinkled coppery coloured leaves, and sporting all along the top of its layered branches, rounded heads of soft-pink flowers. I thought it was one of the most beautiful flowering shrubs I had ever seen. Having grown it ever since, familiarity has not dimmed my enthusiasm. After flowering the leaves turn green and best colour is achieved by growing in nearly full sun.

Height 2m.
Origin Garden origin (species Japan).
Conditions Good, humus-rich soil; full sun to light shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Early summer.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

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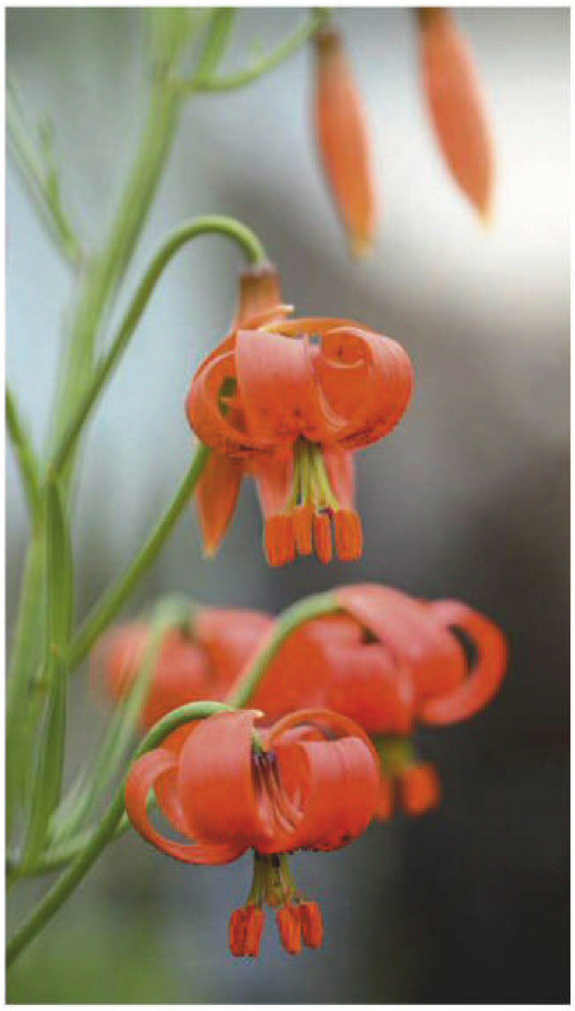
An unusual plant to consider is: Buddleja Silver Anniversary ‘Morning Mist’

A very silver showy rounded tidy shrub that grows well in heat, loves the sun and absolutely shines in the garden. As a late flowering Buddleja it can’t be beaten.

To find stockists and other plants bred by Peter, visit his website at **www.bredbypetermoore.co.uk** the home of exceptional garden plants

> In the garden, as in the wild, *Lilium pomponium* usually produces two or three tightly curled, deep orange-red Turk's cap flowers



LILIUM POMPONIUM

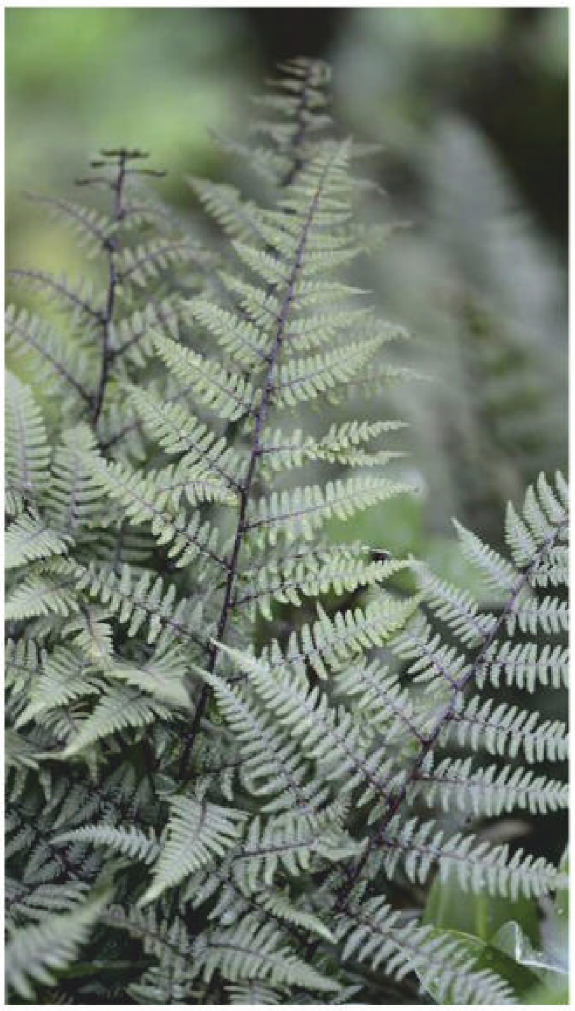
A small lily with a difference that relishes a really warm, sunny spot. Although it originally comes from the limestone mountain ranges of the southern Maritime Alps, in cultivation it does not demand a limey soil. In the garden, as in the wild, it usually produces only two or three tightly curled, deep orange-red Turk's cap flowers. I grow it in a very stony soil, protected from our high rainfall, where in a good year, each stem can produce upwards of 15 flowers. It can be short-lived, but it is easily raised from seed, usually flowering by the third year.

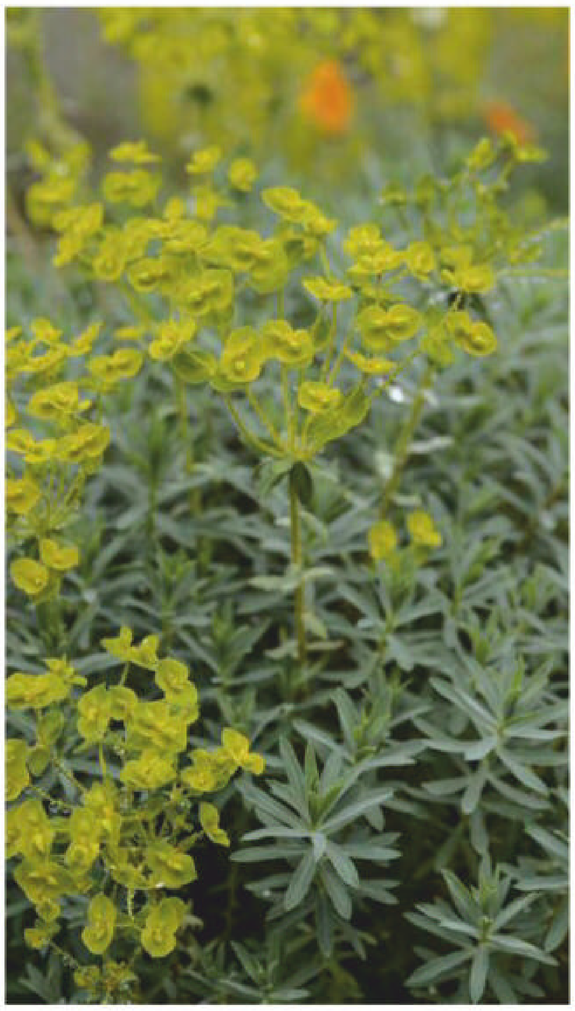
Height 30-60cm.
Origin Southern France, Italy.
Conditions Well-drained, soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Early summer.

ATHYRIUM 'GHOST'

I have been growing the Japanese painted lady fern, *Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum*, all my gardening life, but have found that it's low stature and running habit was not sufficiently robust to withstand the general hurly-burly of life in the open garden. So, discovering a silver-leaved fern that was taller with the classic vase shape of wild ferns and robust to boot, was a revelation. It has not disappointed and even though I have now grown many other silver-leaved ferns, this one still remains top of my pile for garden worthiness. AGM*.

Height 60cm.
Origin Garden origin (species Japan).
Conditions Moist, well-drained soil; shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Spring and summer.





EUPHORBIA 'BLUE HAZE'

This compact spurge, bred by Robin White of Blackthorn Nursery, is a wonderful plant for a sunny, well-drained (even poor and stony) soil, looking especially good where the ground is surfaced with gravel or stones. With narrow, blue-grey leaves it is smothered with yellow-green flowerheads in early summer, making a wonderful foil for other rounded shrublets, such as helianthemums. After flowering, cut it back to keep the plant compact and improve flowering the following year, but wear gloves as the sap can be harmful.

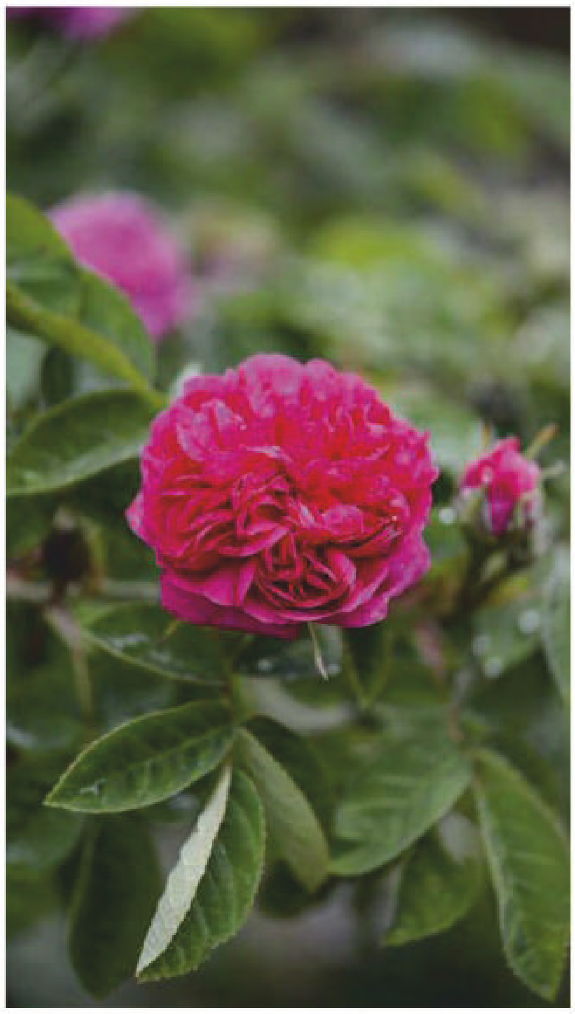
Height 30cm.
Origin Garden origin (*E. seguieriana* subsp. *niciciana* x *E. nicaeensis*).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-10b.
Season of interest Year long; early summer for flowers.

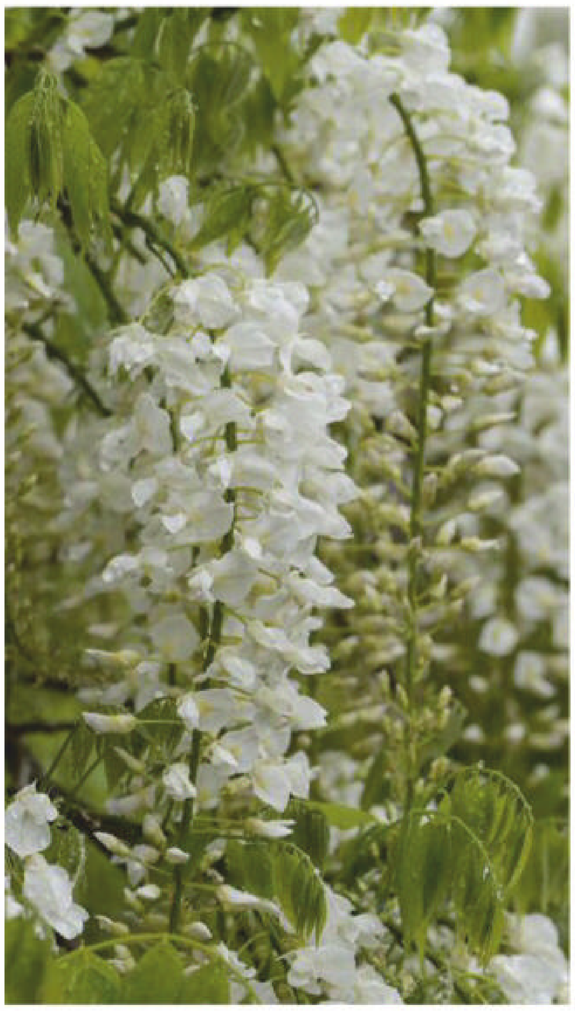
Wisteria floribunda cultivars tend to have longer racemes of flowers and this highly scented cultivar flowers slightly later

ROSA 'DE RESHT'

I don't expect any sympathy from those of you gardening on alkaline soils in drier parts of the country, but roses are generally not good in high rainfall areas. However, this shrub rose, an older cultivar, is an exception to this rule and an utter delight. It flowers all summer long and well into early autumn with highly scented, double flowers. It makes a compact, well-shaped bush with lush foliage, remarkably tolerant of blackspot and seems just as happy in a semi-shaded spot as in full sun. It was also my wife's favourite rose, and so it has now become my favourite too. AGM.

Height 1-1.5m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Well-drained, soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season of interest All summer.





WISTERIA FLORIBUNDA F. *ALBA* 'SHIRO-NODA'

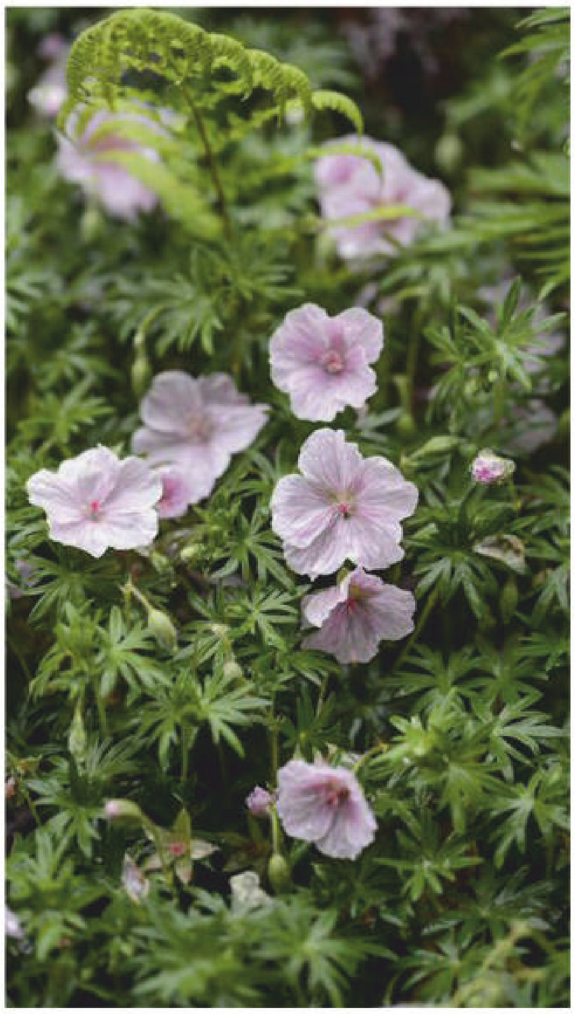
I love wisterias of all sorts and one at least would definitely make my desert island list of plants. I grow many as free-standing shrubs with one or more short trunks, given a strong support in their early years until they can support themselves. Any wisteria can be grown like this, and then pruned in the normal way to make wonderful specimen plants. *W. floribunda* cultivars tend to have longer racemes of flowers, and this highly scented cultivar, flowers slightly later than others, and is simply magnificent. AGM.

Height Climber to 6m.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Early summer for flowers.

GERANIUM SANGUINEUM VAR. *STRIATUM*

It is easy to overlook perennials that are almost bomb-proof in their reliability not only to grow but to flower every year. This geranium comes into this category, growing nearly anywhere, immune to pests and diseases, and covering itself for months with intricately veined flowers above gently spreading tidy clumps of attractive foliage. Small and neat enough to consort happily with alpines or bulbs, yet robust enough to be used as an effective groundcover to prevent weed growth, this is a plant that deserves even more widespread planting. AGM.

Height 20cm.
Origin UK native.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest All summer.



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FUTURE PROSPECTS

An air of expectation hangs over the May kitchen garden as the days lengthen, the soil warms, and planting and sowing gather pace (along with the weeds and the wildlife)

WORDS AARON BERTELSEN
ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

May is a time of great optimism in the garden. Seedlings and young plants revel in the sunshine and the promise of longer days and warmer nights, nature is bursting forth all around and nothing much – as yet – has had time to go wrong. A little bit of planning and diligent maintenance now will help ensure that all this early promise is fulfilled in the shape of bountiful harvests later on.

By now, any containers moved under cover for protection over the winter should be out and about and enjoying the weather. I am a great believer in regular doses of fresh air for both plants and people – blame my upbringing in New Zealand, where we spent most of our time outside – and everything from citrus trees to scented-leaf pelargoniums will grow all the stronger and better for it.

The soil should also be warm enough for direct-sown seed to germinate. Parsnips, carrots and beetroot will all do very well sown in this way, provided your soil is well prepared with a good, fine tilth. I find it difficult not to sow too thickly, but recently have found a way to turn this to my advantage. When I thin my rows, I simply replant the thinnings alongside the original row, creating two for the price of one. While root vegetables generally hate this kind of disturbance, it seems to work provided you catch them while they are still small and water them in well.

Unfortunately, it is not just the flora that is stirring at this time of the year; the fauna is also well and truly awake by now, and eager to feast on all that succulent young greenery. My armoury includes fleece to throw over carrot seedlings – a simple but effective way to defeat carrot fly – a plant spray filled with soapy water for greenfly and blackfly, and a regular sprinkling of organic slug pellets. You will need to keep an eye on weeds, too. They can easily smother young plants, and deprive them of the nutrients, water and light they need to thrive. I rely on my trusty Dutch hoe to weed – carefully – between the rows. Little and often is best. ❐

Jobs for May

Plants such as tomatoes and climbing beans need to be in the ground in May if they are to have sufficient time to mature and produce a crop. Temperatures can still drop at this time of year though, and a sudden move from a sheltered environment to the garden may prove fatal. Harden plants off by gradually increasing their exposure to the elements each day for a week or so before you plant them out, and wait until night-time temperatures have stopped dipping below around 7°C.

Maincrop peas should be in the ground now, whether in your vegetable patch or in a container. Good sturdy supports are essential – I like to use pea sticks for the plants to scramble up – and these should be put in place before you sow so that you don't subsequently damage the seedlings.

Keep sowing salad, to ensure a succession right through the summer and into the autumn. Sowing a small amount every three to four weeks should do the trick, but remember, there is no point growing more than you can eat or give away, and no point having lots of crops going to seed if you're going to be away for half the summer.

Sow sweet corn. Last year I outwitted the badgers by growing it in a large fabric bag outside the kitchen door. It worked brilliantly, and meant I had all the fun of watching it grow, too.

If you haven't already done so, this is your last chance to sow pumpkins, squash and courgettes. They really need to be in the ground by mid-May if they are to have time to grow and ripen properly. They can also work very well grown in a pot, given adequate space, a good rich compost and regular feeding with something like liquid seaweed.

This is the perfect time to sow winter brassicas. In my view, there is little point in doing it any earlier, otherwise you will have more greens coming through while the summer crops are still going strong. I also find that crops such as a cabbages and kale taste better after a cold snap, which raises the levels of sugar in their leaves.

As the weather warms up and plants enter a period of vigorous growth, you must be diligent about watering and, for plants in containers in particular, feeding. A dose of liquid seaweed once a week will work wonders. With watering, the mantra is, as ever, water well, not often. A really good soak will encourage the plants to reach their roots right down into the soil and make them less vulnerable in a dry spell.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CROPS

If you were organised enough to sow salad crops in early spring, you will be reaping the benefits now. Of all the crops I grow, I think it is the salads that bring me most pleasure. To eat a plate of **fresh greens,** with a simple vinaigrette, is to taste the garden itself.

If the weather has been kind, **gooseberry bushes** may be starting to crop towards the end of the month. The hard, young fruit is mouth-puckeringly sharp – absolutely perfect for making a creamy gooseberry fool. Try it with a couple of freshly baked shortbread biscuits on the side. Ambrosia.

For those who grow **asparagus**, now is your moment to shine. I do not grow it myself, but thankfully I have friends who do, and who are willing to swap some spears for a few globe artichokes. Another star of the season, **globe artichokes** will keep producing fruit throughout the summer but are at their best now, while their stems are still young and tender. Simply boiled for around 45 minutes, and dressed with good olive oil, salt and pepper, they make a perfect starter.

For Aaron's tasty stuffed artichoke recipe, please go to gardensillustrated.com/recipes

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GARDENING TALENT

JAMIE HARRIS

Swapping a career in television for one in horticulture, Jamie has progressed from National Trust apprentice to head gardener

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Early garden memory I have fond memories of burning leaves with my grandad at the bottom of his garden.

What was your first career? I spent about 15 years working in the television industry. I was getting fed up with working weekends and overnight shifts and sitting in dark studios, so I started to think about a career change. After falling in love with my allotment, I started volunteering at my nearest National Trust garden and it was there that I heard about the NT Careership programme.

Horticultural heroes In a way, the volunteers here at Polesden Lacey. Without them the garden would be a jungle. We have volunteer teams in the veg garden, the cut flower garden, the formal gardens, the pleasure grounds and teams who mend benches, fix fences and build cold frames. We have volunteers who give garden tours, look after our chickens, write plant labels and everything else in between.

Worthwhile tip for every gardener Mulch, mulch and mulch! Not only does it greatly improve the aesthetics of a border, organic mulch also suppresses weeds, retains moisture, improves soil structure, encourages worm activity and protects roots from frost.

Least favourite plant I've never been a fan of *Alchemilla mollis.* It's quite thuggish and needs regular attention in terms of cutting back to get the best from it. Imagine my delight when I discovered *Alchemilla erythropoda*, a much neater, more delicate version of lady's mantle, and planted it here at Polesden Lacey.

Unsung hero of the plant world I love the sight of a lawn studded with daisies. It evokes such a bucolic, natural scene. Daisies are also great for attracting pollinating insects to the garden and the birds that predate on them. Not many people know that daisies can be used to make an infusion or that the leaves are edible and high in vitamin C.

Guiding principles You need to realise that you'll never know everything and one of the joys of working in horticulture is that you'll learn something new almost every day.

Your next big project in the garden We plan to restore the old kitchen garden, create a winter walk to connect the Rock Garden to our historic Winter Garden, restore the garden's historic views – and more.

Favourite gardening books When I first became a head gardener, I found English Heritage's *The Management and Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens and Landscapes* by John Watkins and Tom Wright a fantastic resource for everything from historic research and visitor flow to glasshouse restoration and orchard management. It's currently out of print but a more accessible version of this sort of book is *At West Dean* by Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain (White Lion Publishing, 2018).

Contact jamie.harris@nationaltrust.org.uk

Made in design

Designer Conrad Batten has brought a painterly style to the gardens of a former rectory, with sustainability at the fore

WORDS **MATTHEW REESE** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

18+

WHAT IS

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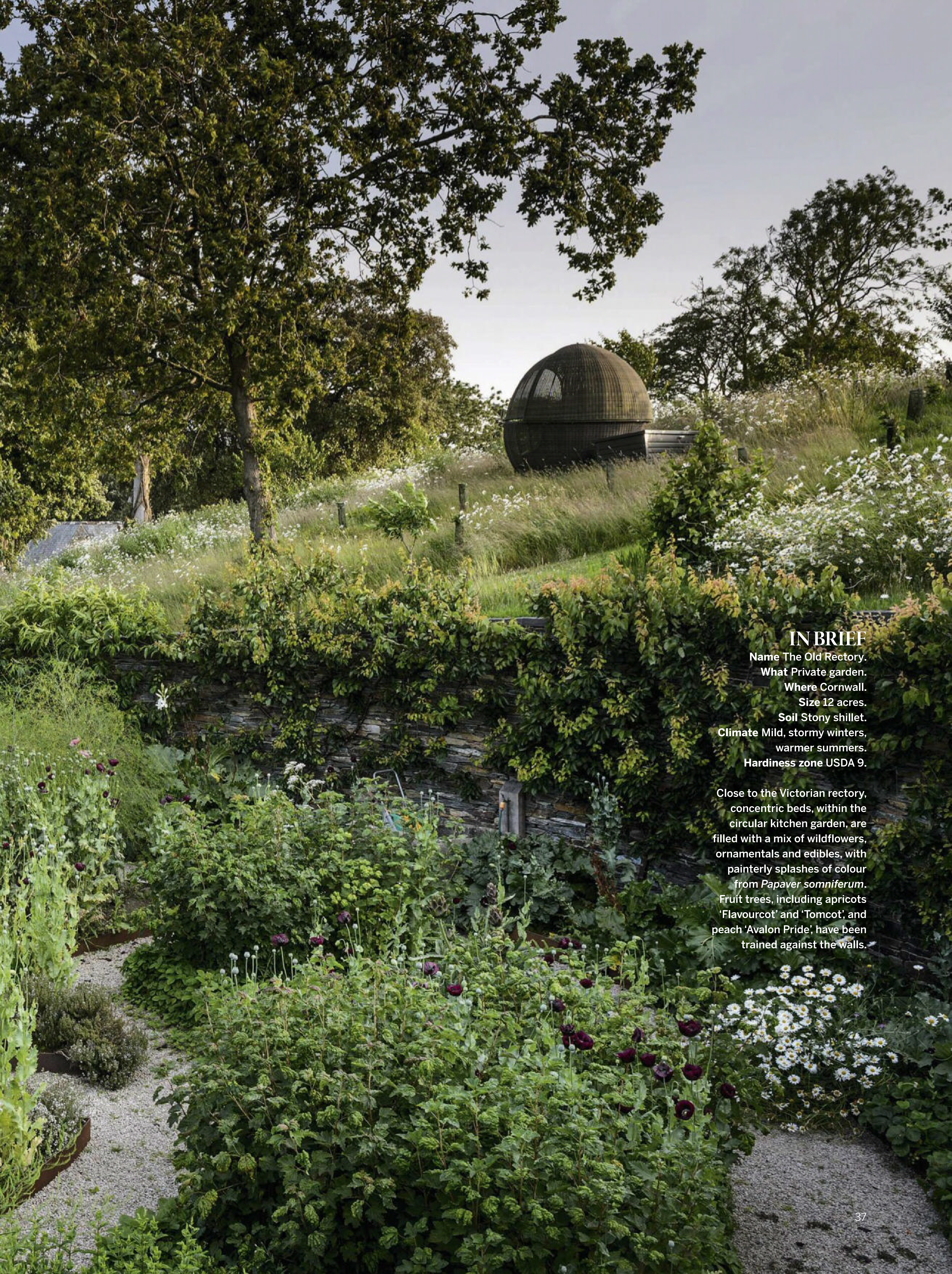


IN BRIEF

Name The Old Rectory.
What Private garden.
Where Cornwall.
Size 12 acres.
Soil Stony shillet.
Climate Mild, stormy winters, warmer summers.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

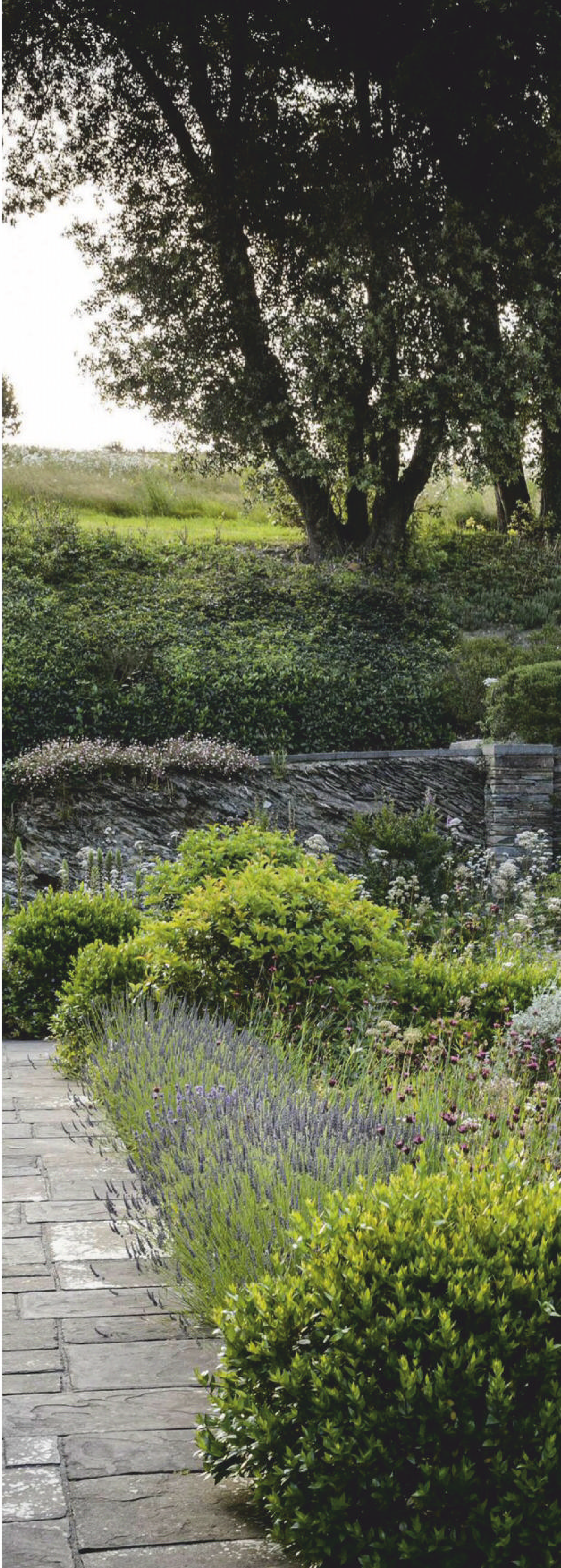
Close to the Victorian rectory, concentric beds, within the circular kitchen garden, are filled with a mix of wildflowers, ornamentals and edibles, with painterly splashes of colour from *Papaver somniferum*. Fruit trees, including apricots 'Flavourcot' and 'Tomcot', and peach 'Avalon Pride', have been trained against the walls.

The challenge was to release the sharp lines of the rectory from the woodland and wed the house within the Cornish countryside

Perched on sloping ground, just above a small, wooded valley and surrounded by rolling Cornish countryside, sits a striking Victorian house, known locally as the Old Rectory. Designed in 1858 by the notable British architect, William Butterfield, a prominent exponent of the Gothic Revival, the house was used as a rectory right up until the early 1970s, and in 1988 it was given Grade II listed status, meaning it has remained largely unchanged.

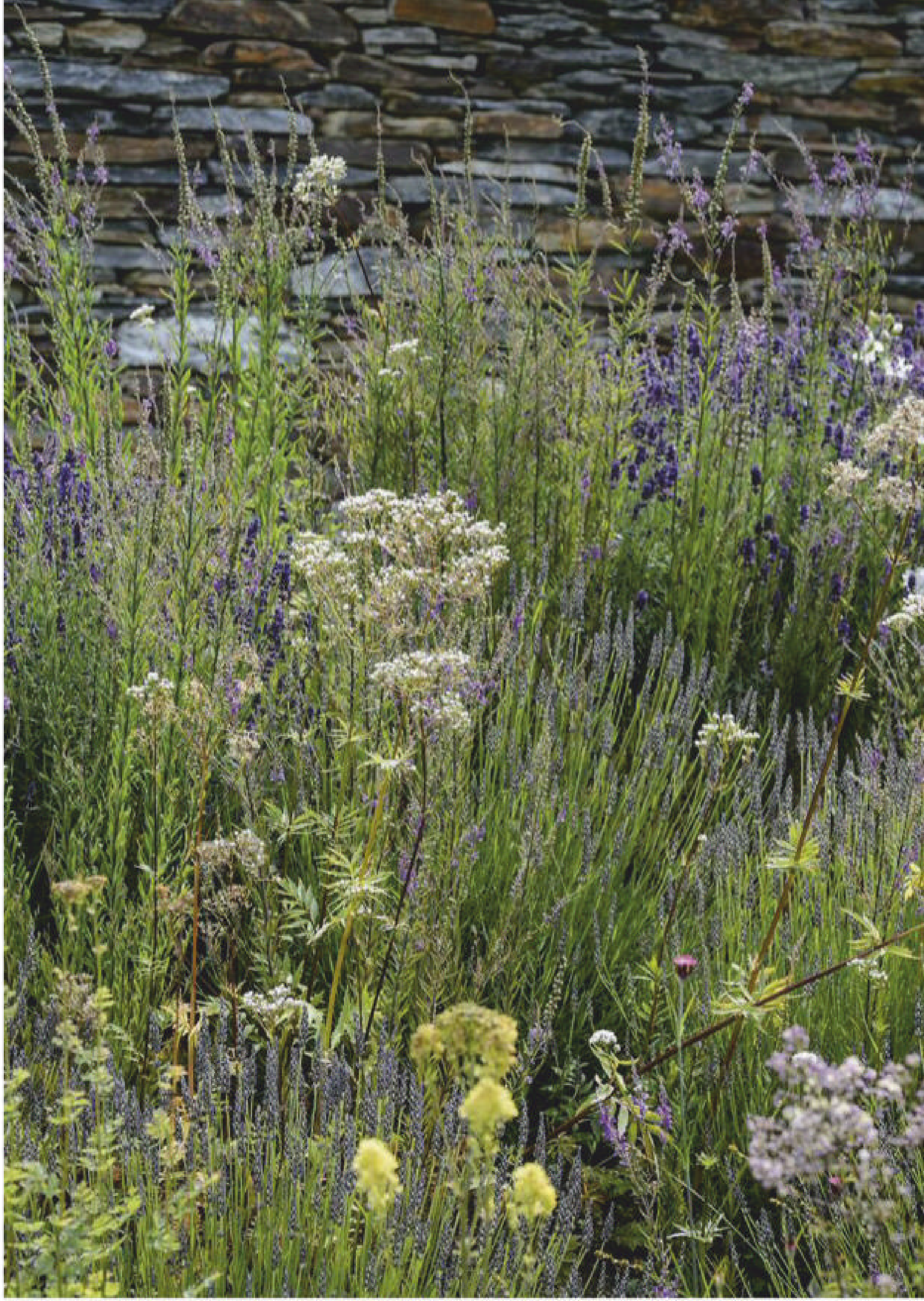
Nine years ago the current owners brought in garden designer Conrad Batten to renovate the area around the house, organise the driveway, and to create a dining terrace on the western elevation. The house was hemmed in by woodland, which on one hand grounded the building, but on the other was quite oppressive. The owners wanted to open the area up to access more light, air and space. They also wanted more formality and topiary in the garden. However, as Conrad points out, the house is just one and a half miles inland from Mawgan Porth on Cornwall's north coast and so the woodland offered an element of much-needed shelter. His challenge was to release the sharp lines of the Gothic rectory from the woodland and wed the house within the surrounding Cornish countryside.

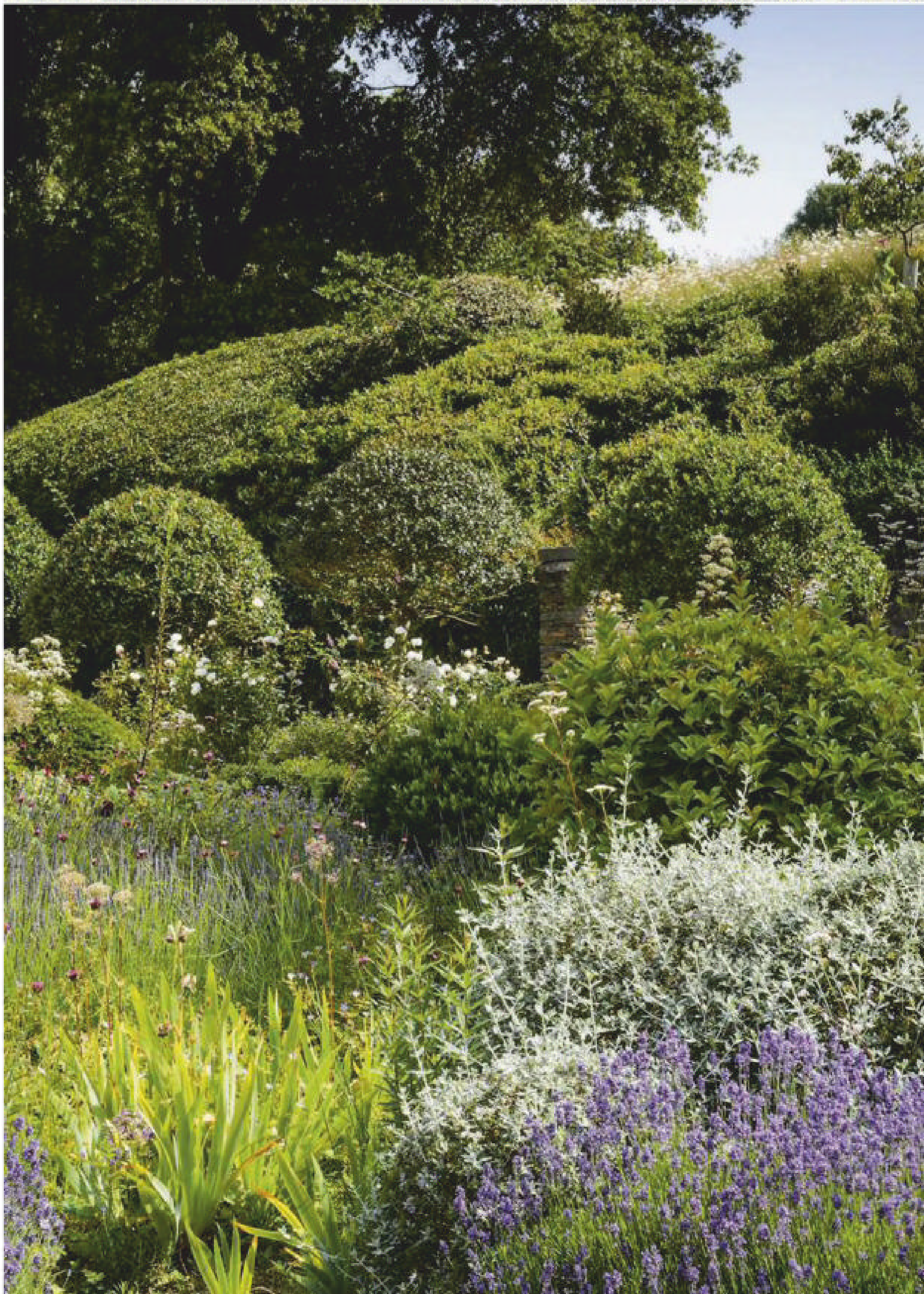
Work on the project began slowly and carefully. Wishing to avoid an abrupt, heavy-handed approach, Conrad worked closely with the owners, evolving the design, forging the trust for the future garden. He added clipped myrtle and teucrium to the garden at the front of the house, which brought structure and formality and helped, as Conrad explains, "to firm the house in the garden". Snaking, dry stone-effect, retaining walls were constructed using a slate stone from the local quarries of Trecarne and Delabole that creates a hard and ▷



Right Much of the garden is built on a slope, with retaining walls – constructed by Devon-based stonemason Steve Compton using Cornish slate stone from local quarries – helping to differentiate between formal and wilder areas. On the front lawn, clipped *Myrtus communis* and *Teucrium fruticans* 'Drysdale' add structure to the planting. In keeping with the owners' wishes, the colour palette here is mostly white, blue and red, with *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead' and *L. angustifolia* 'Hidcote' and *Dianthus carthusianorum* creating a subtle blend of colour.

Planting throughout the garden is characteristic of a naturalistic, free-flowing, yet adventurous style





▷ fast link between house and garden. The snaking, sinuous walls echo the lithe curves of the countryside beyond the garden.

Along the drive Conrad installed six pairs of parasol hollies, which not only create a sense of rhythm and formality, but as they also take inspiration from the quatrefoil motif found on the fireplaces inside the rectory, develop even further the link between house and garden. The hollies are underplanted with a carpet medley of the white-flowered *Rosa* Susan Williams-Ellis (= 'Ausquirk'), *Geranium nodosum* and *Allium sphaerocephalon*.

The finer planting throughout the garden is characteristic of a naturalistic, free-flowing, yet adventurous style and creates an exciting contrast to the more static structure and solidity of the clipped forms. Pip Vaughan, the head gardener for eight years has nurtured this style, creating an intricate ecological resilience. Plantings also provide a reassuring link with the meadows beyond the garden. There is an experimental touch to Conrad's gardening, pushing the limits of what can be successfully grown in the north Cornwall climate, including quite a few Mediterranean plants. Citrus trees have recently been planted taking advantage of the intense Cornish sunshine and free-draining soils. Throughout the borders there is fusion between wildflowers, ornamentals and edibles. In the carefully choreographed borders in the walled garden, roses,

To continue turn to page 44 ▷

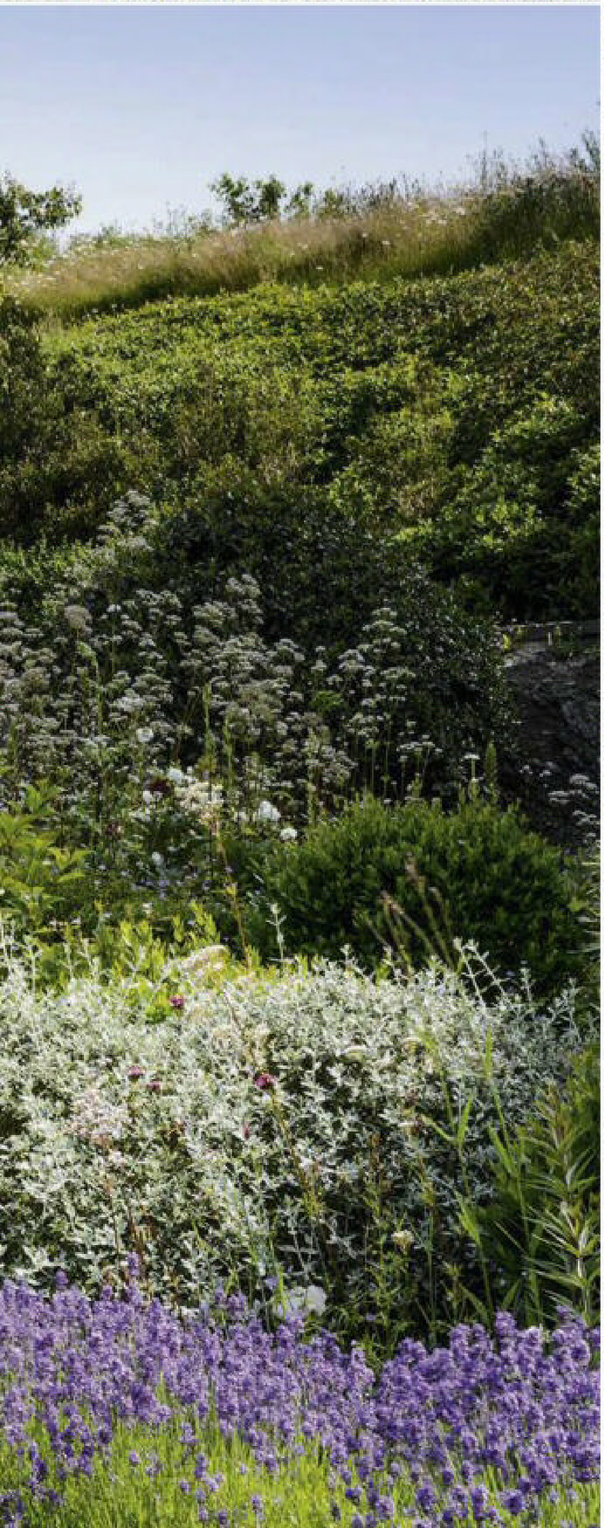
Clockwise from top left

Several Mediterranean plants, including this naturalistic planting of *Lavandula* x *intermedia* 'Grosso', *Valeriana officinalis, Malva moschata* f. *alba*, *Dianthus carthusianorum*, *Linaria purpurea* and *Thalictrum flavum*, thrive in this the garden's unimproved, dry, stony shillet soil.

Towards the garden's edge a wooden carving by local musician Jonny Fenner nestles within a meadow of ox-eye daisies, *Leucanthemum vulgare,* surrounded by several Cornish apple tree cultivars.

Edibles, including *Salvia officinalis* 'Purpurascens' and *Origanum vulgare*, mingle with ornamentals, such as *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead', *Iris* 'Snow Tracery', *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low' and *Sanguisorba* 'Tanna' in a steeply sloping bed beneath the terrace.

A group of *Ilex aquifolium* balls, mirroring the quatrefoil motifs found inside the rectory, add clipped structure to the shrub line along with *Prunus lusitanica*, *Viburnum tinus* 'Eve Price' and *Luma apiculata*. In front of these clipped shapes the white shrub rose *Rosa* Susan Williams-Ellis (= 'Ausquirk') adds a fresh link to colourful planting below.



30 KEY PLANTS

1 *Linaria purpurea* Thin spires of mauve snapdragon flowers held atop tall stems. Plants prefer free-draining soil and will self-seed. 60cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b[†].

2 *Leucanthemum vulgare* Ox-eye daisies have large white flowers with yellow eyes. An opportunist that can grow in a meadow, or even a wall. 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

3 *Lotus corniculatus* Bird's foot trefoil, a wonderful meadow creeper with yellow flowers. Common blue butterfly caterpillars rely on the foliage for food. 70cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

4 *Rosa* 'Cardinal de Richelieu' Lightly scented with deep-purple flowers. Prune and feed to ensure good flowering. 1.2m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

5 *Valeriana officinalis* Excellent self-sowing perennial with tall, slender stems topped with clipped small white flowers. Weave through borders for continuity. 1.5m. RHS H4, USDA 4a-7b.

6 *Ilex aquifolium* Common holly with lustrous, spiny leaves. Grow as a tree, hedge or clip into topiary. Red berries. 12m. AGM[*]. RHS H6, USDA 7a-9b.

7 *Thalictrum* 'Elin' Produces mounds of glaucous-purple foliage in spring and cream flowers on slender stems in summer. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H7.

8 *Geranium nodosum* Long-flowering, drought-tolerant and produces pale mauve-blue flowers throughout the summer. A must for a woodland garden. 40cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

9 *Malva moschata* f. *alba* Short-lived perennial with clusters of white flowers on rangy stems. Can flower first year from seed and will naturalise. 90cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

10 *Lavandula* x *intermedia* 'Grosso' Makes tight mounds of evergreen, aromatic foliage. Thin stems carry short panicles of lavender-blue flowers. 60cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

11 *Centaurea nigra* Important nectar plant for wildlife. A tough perennial wildflower with branched stems and purple-pink, thistle-like flowers. 1m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-10a.

12 *Papaver somniferum* An excellent self-seeding hardy annual. Makes large poppy flowers in shades of pink and mauve. 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

13 *Rosa* Queen of Sweden (= 'Austiger') English shrub rose with lovely, soft pink, open flowers that are myrrh-scented and continue into autumn. 1m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

14 *Origanum vulgare* Perennial, aromatic herb, with small, ovate leaves and masses of tiny pink flowers in summer. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

15 *Taxus baccata* The native common yew is a good evergreen for hedging or clipping into smart topiary shapes. Be careful because all parts are poisonous. 15m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 6a-7b.

16 *Papaver somniferum* 'Lauren's Grape' A dark plum-coloured opium poppy. Will come true from seed if not polluted with inferior forms. 1.5m. RHS H5.

17 *Myrtus communis* Small, shiny green leaves and masses of small, white flowers in summer. 3m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.

18 *Sanguisorba* 'Tanna' Dark-red flowers appear above attractive, blue-grey foliage from summer through to autumn. 50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

19 *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' Makes huge, white flowerheads on new growth. Prune in winter to a few buds and feed well with compost. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

20 *Dianthus carthusianorum* Forms cushions of narrow, bright-green foliage, with clusters of nectar-rich magenta flowers. 40cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

21 *Rumex acetosa* Leaves have a sharp lemony taste. Cut back flowerheads before seed ripens to prevent excessive self-sowing. 1.5m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

22 *Eryngium giganteum* A biennial with sharp silver foliage and bracts with conical umbels of small, blue flowers. Brilliant for bees. 80cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

23 *Teucrium fruticans* Mediterranean shrub suitable for warm, sunny and free-draining sites. Attractive grey foliage and lavender-coloured flowers. 1m. RHS H3, USDA 5a-9b.

24 *Rosa* William Shakespeare (= 'Ausroyal') Large, double crimson red blooms that are strongly scented. May need assistance as it is susceptible to disease. 1.5m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

25 *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead' Makes good displays of strong lavender-blue flowers atop typical, aromatic grey foliage. Needs a sunny, free-draining position. 60cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

26 *Rosa* Susan Williams-Ellis (= 'Ausquirk') Makes small trusses of double, white flowers throughout summer. Extremely disease resistant. Feed and prune well. 1.5m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

27 *Salvia officinalis* 'Purpurascens' Muted purple foliage makes a wonderful foil for more vibrant flowers. Cut back in spring. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

28 *Geranium* x *johnsonii* 'Johnson's Blue' In early summer masses of glowing, pale-blue flowers are held above mounds of bright-green foliage. 80cm. RHS H7, USDA 4 to 8b.

29 *Acanthus mollis* 'Rue Ledan' Spikes of white flowers from mid to late summer. 1.3m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 7a-10b.

30 *Geranium sanguineum* 'Album' Spreading mounds of green foliage topped with white geranium flowers. A white version of the native bloody cranesbill. 30cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4 to 8b.

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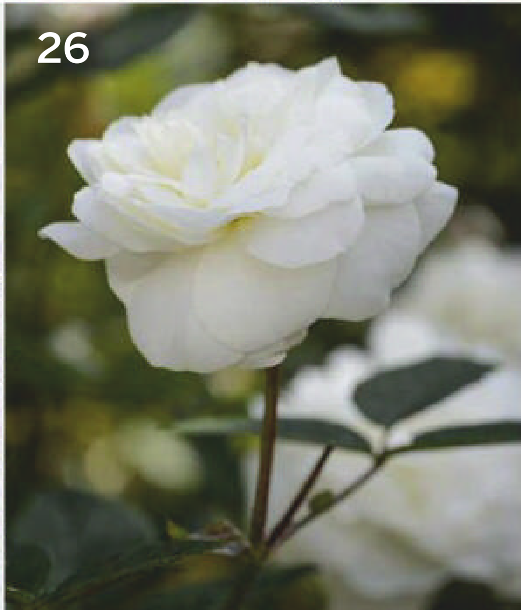
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[*] Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.

14 FLOWERPHOTOS / GETTY IMAGES, 18 CLAIRE TAKACS

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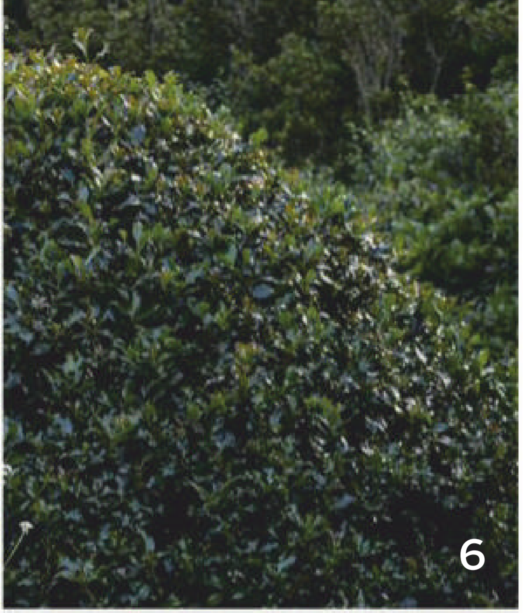
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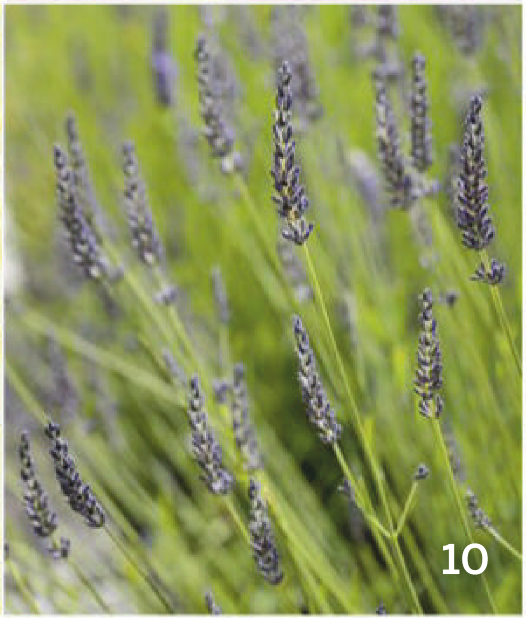
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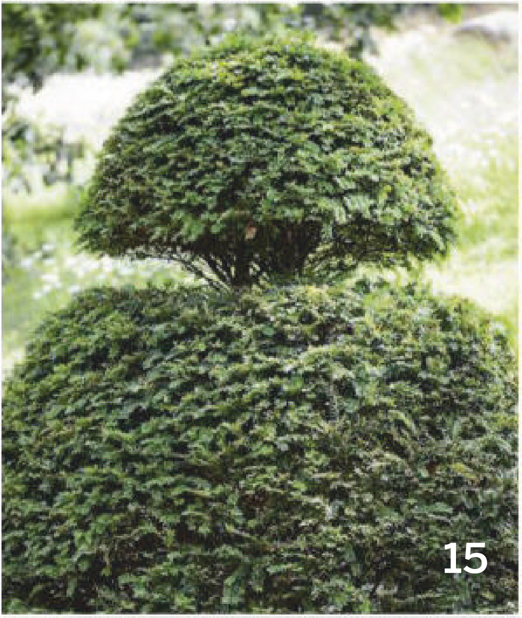
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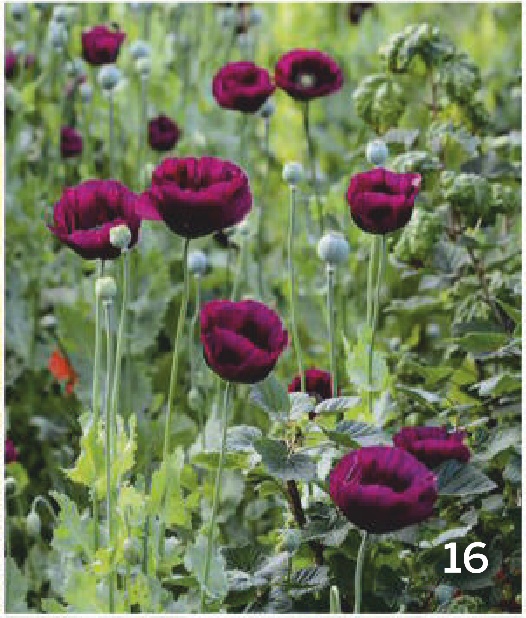
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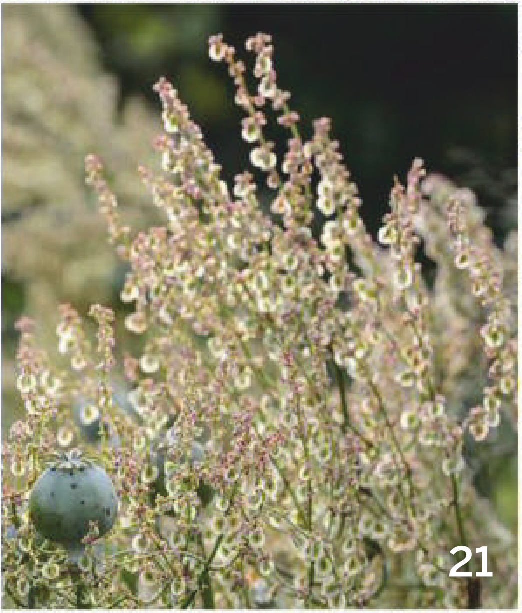
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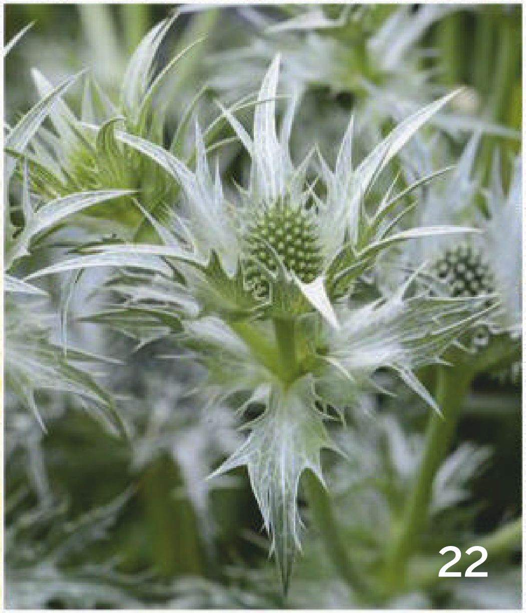
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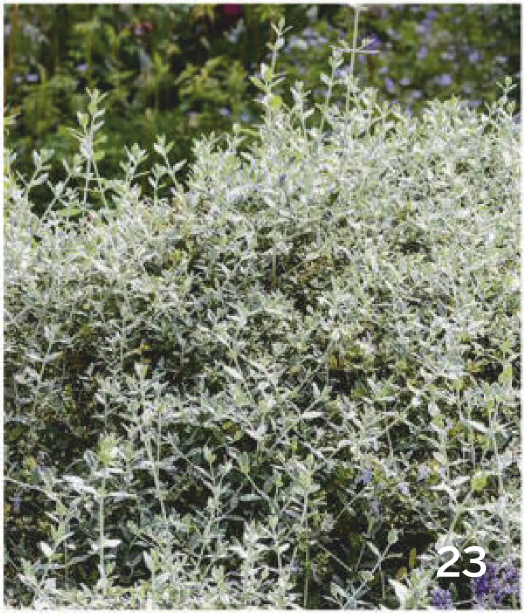
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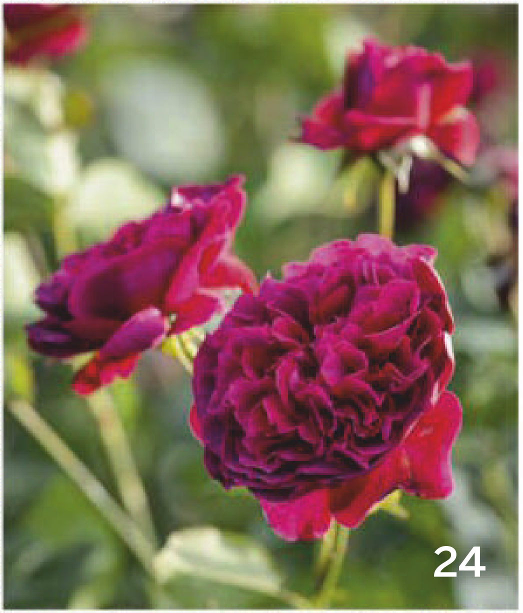
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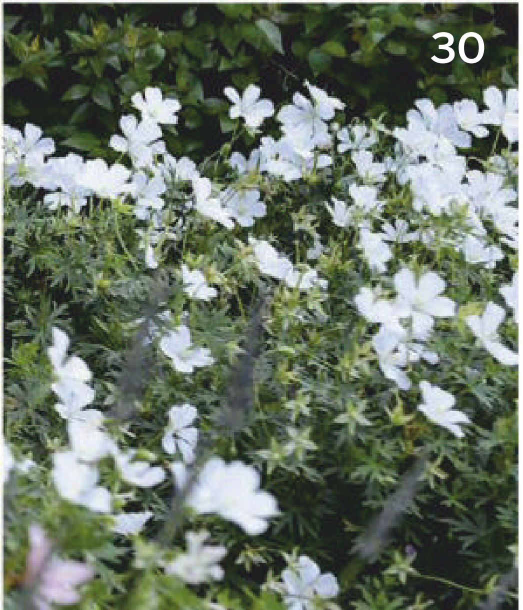
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The owners requested no yellow, orange, or salmon-coloured flowers, so the mood is set with white, pinks, reds and blues

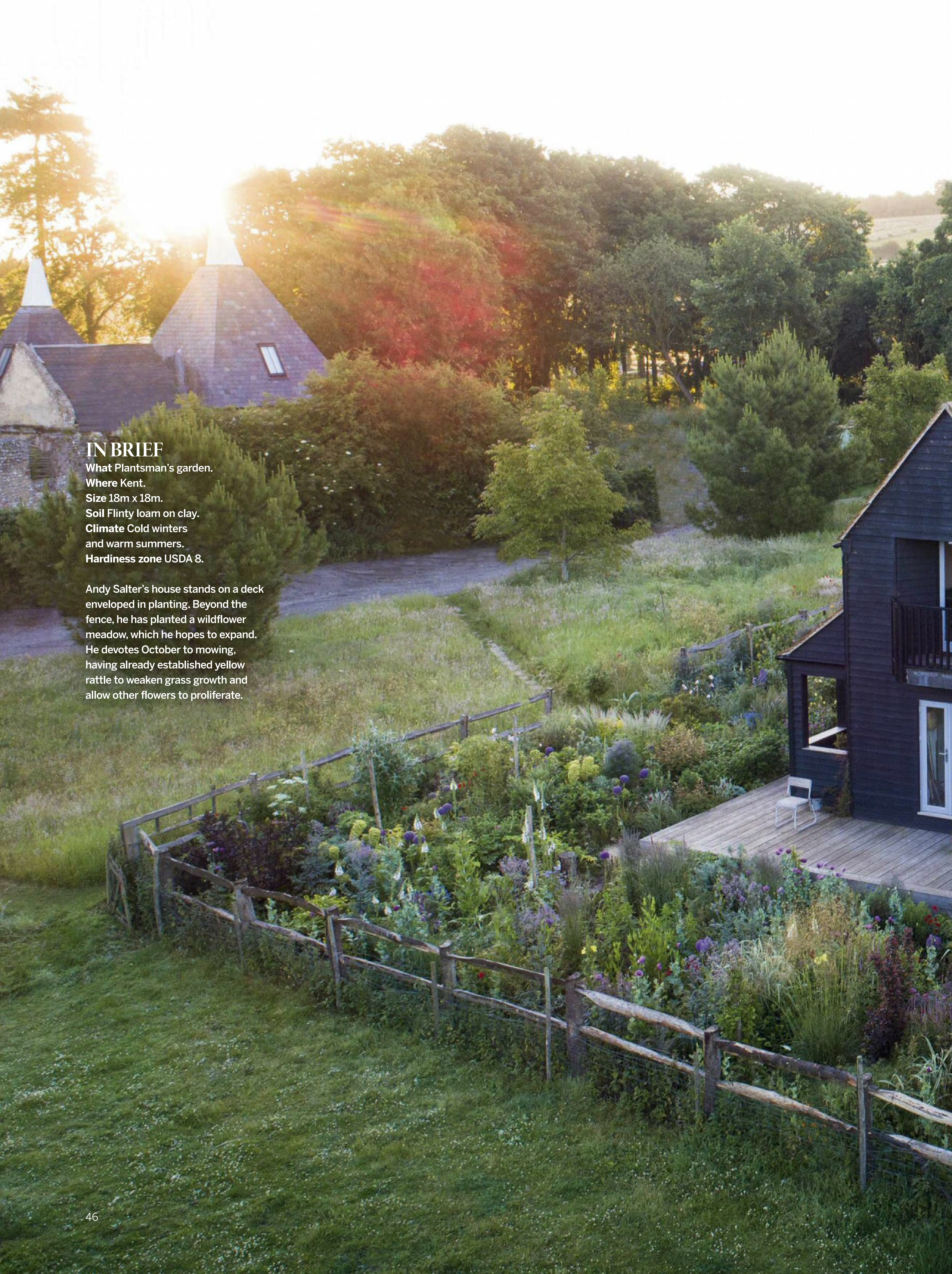
▷ thalictrums, and poppies sit cheek by jowl with asparagus, black, white and red currants and are underplanted with chamomile and strawberries. Herb beds are planted with thyme, sorrel and garlic chives. The owners requested that there should be no yellow, orange, or salmon-coloured flowers in the garden, and so the mood is set with white, pinks, reds and blues. Again, Conrad has sought to provoke a conversation between the house and garden, taking inspiration from the house's architect. "Butterfield would include colour in his buildings, with flashes here and there," he explains. In answer to this Conrad has used an almost impressionistic style of planting, or as he describes it, having a "painterly flicking of colour throughout".

In 2014, there was a second push to develop the garden. Tracing the curve of the hill, a steel estate fence was installed which now divides the top meadow into two, and a native apple orchard has now been planted. "It was pretty risky," admits Conrad. "It is very exposed on this higher elevation – we can see the coast here." But the risk has paid off. "The trees are leaning, and that's nice, they have a windswept shape, linking to the sea and rooting them in place." The orchard has also been planted with native cherries, using local cultivars sourced from near Bodmin, such as 'Early Birchenhayes' and 'Burcombe'. Elsewhere in the garden, more tender fruit trees, including peaches and apricots, are tucked next to the walls, taking advantage of microclimates.

Gardens on Cornwall's north coast are limited in number – and for good reason. The growing conditions present a series of challenges and can be quite harsh. But, with good plant husbandry and an artistic flare, Conrad Batten has created a very beautiful and unique Cornish flower garden at the Old Rectory. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Conrad's work at **conradbattendesign.co.uk**

Right At the edge of the circular kitchen garden, Conrad's naturalistic and free-flowing style comes to the fore with a romantic mix of *Thalictrum* 'Elin', *Papaver somniferum* 'Lauren's Grape' and roses, including *Rosa* 'Cardinal de Richelieu' and *R.* Scepter'd Isle (= 'Ausland'), underplanted with herbs including camomile. Beyond the dry-stone wall is an area known as Cob Nut meadow, featuring English hazels, such as *Corylus maxima* 'Hall's Giant Cob', *C. maxima* 'Nottingham Cobnut' and *C. maxima* 'Webb's Prize Cobb'.



IN BRIEF

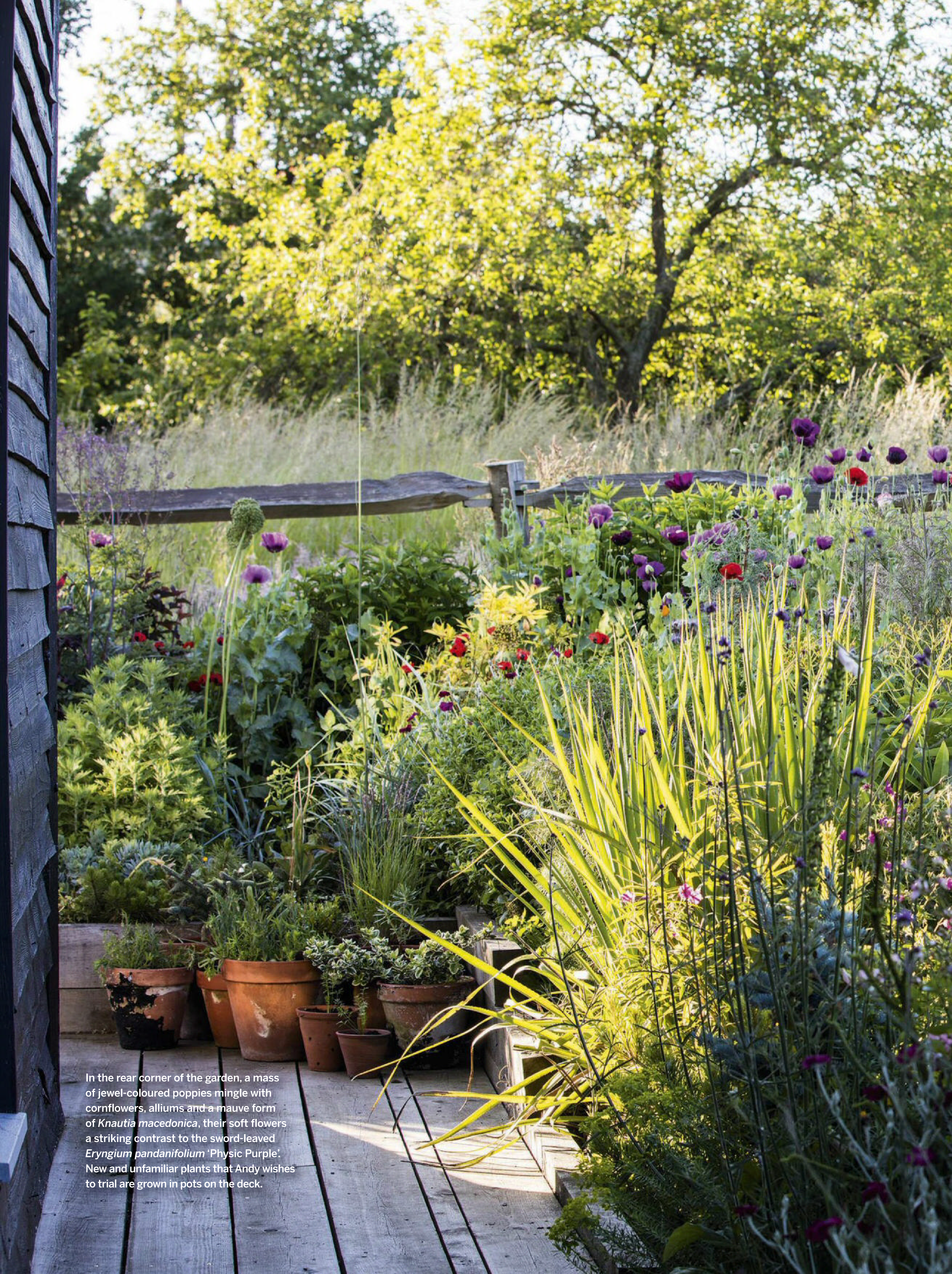
What Plantsman's garden.
Where Kent.
Size 18m x 18m.
Soil Flinty loam on clay.
Climate Cold winters and warm summers.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

Andy Salter's house stands on a deck enveloped in planting. Beyond the fence, he has planted a wildflower meadow, which he hopes to expand. He devotes October to mowing, having already established yellow rattle to weaken grass growth and allow other flowers to proliferate.

Magic touch

Inspired by Great Dixter's mixed borders, Andy Salter has conjured a dynamic garden full of surprise on a plot in Kent

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS



In the rear corner of the garden, a mass of jewel-coloured poppies mingle with cornflowers, alliums and a mauve form of *Knautia macedonica*, their soft flowers a striking contrast to the sword-leaved *Eryngium pandanifolium* 'Physic Purple'. New and unfamiliar plants that Andy wishes to trial are grown in pots on the deck.

Down a track deep in the Kentish countryside is the kind of landscape usually only encountered in literature. Sheep graze in the fields, kingfishers dart along the river where watercress grows and, sitting proud in a meadow, is a tiny, black-painted house. When Andy Salter first came here in 2014, it was a book that sprung to mind: *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, about his quest for self-sufficiency while on a two-year sojourn in the 1840s in a cabin in the woods around Walden Pond in Massachusetts.

"I read it when I was 15 and I've loved it ever since," says Andy. "I'd take holidays to America and stay in huts in the middle of nowhere but it never seemed like something I could realistically achieve in life. And then here was this place." Simple, wooden and with the potential to be surrounded by garden (at that time there was merely rough grass). It was perfect.

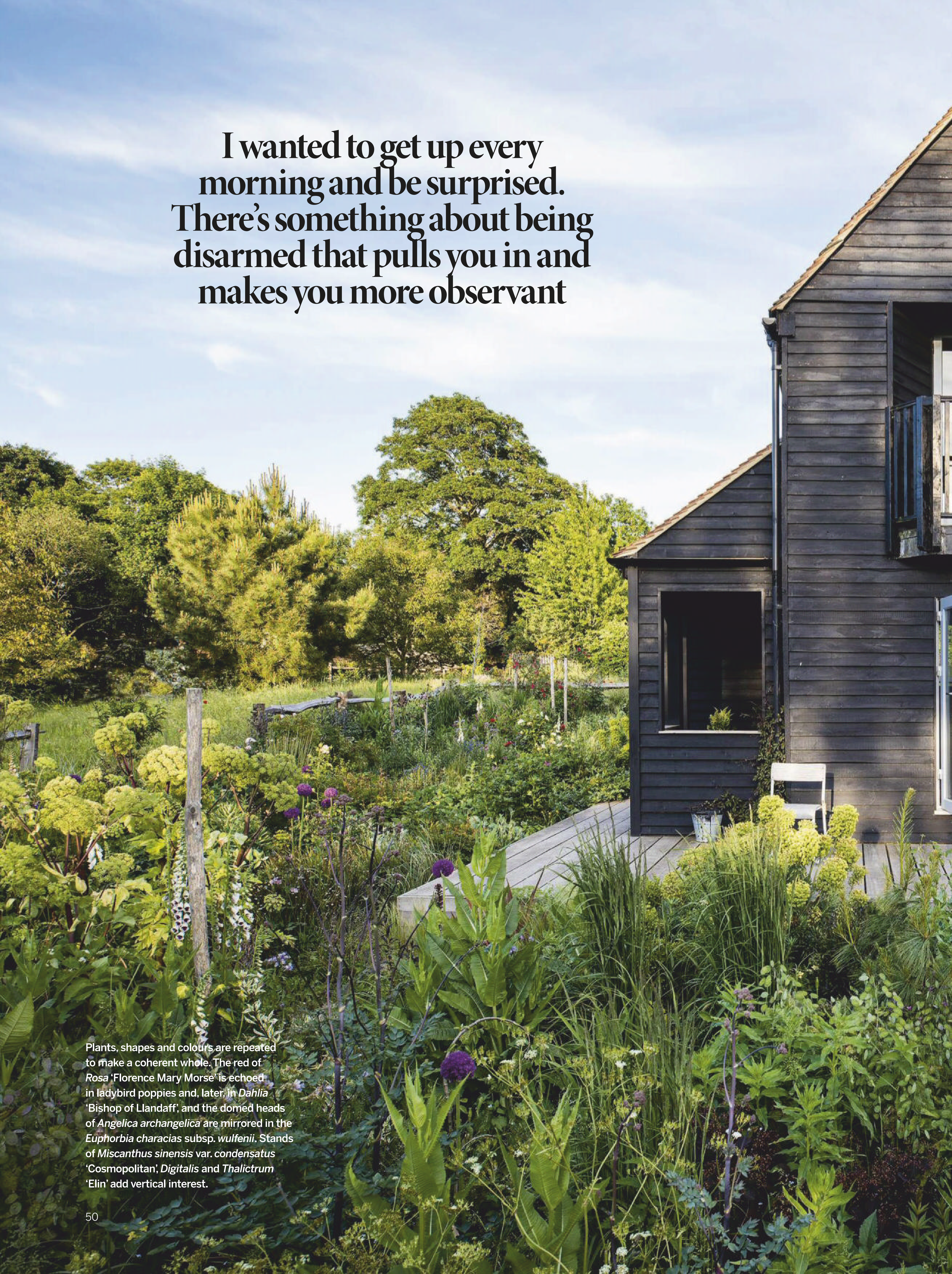
The possibility of making a garden was important to Andy, a special-effects artist, who had also fallen hard for horticulture. A working holiday on a farm in Japan had led to a course at Hadlow College in Kent and then, inspired by a tutor who sang Christopher Lloyd's praises, on to Great Dixter where Andy volunteered under head gardener Fergus Garrett, sometimes for as many as four days a week, for four years.

"I was very shy at first," says Andy. "I was full of admiration for the gardeners and what they were conjuring. It felt like alchemy, and the polar opposite of my career." But as time went on, he realised that the two were more closely linked than he had thought. "A good garden, an evocative garden, is often all about taking elements that don't naturally co-exist and putting them together in a way that's inspiring or pleasing and looks natural, which is what I've spent my whole life doing at work. Gardening takes this to a whole new level because you're working with nature directly," he says. "It's a living composition; there's something magical about it."

This 'magical, natural' dynamic is what Andy set out to create in his own garden. Yew hedges, typical of Great Dixter, were dismissed as they would have taken up too much ornamental space. Instead, Andy took his inspiration from the Long Border, with its artful mixed plantings of trees, shrubs, perennials, bulbs and annuals. "I wanted to get up every morning and be surprised," he says. "There's something about being disarmed that pulls you in, connects you with your surroundings and makes you more observant. It's good for the psyche."

To continue turn to page 52 ▷

An evocative garden is all about taking elements that don't naturally co-exist and putting them together in a way that's inspiring and looks natural



I wanted to get up every morning and be surprised. There's something about being disarmed that pulls you in and makes you more observant

Plants, shapes and colours are repeated to make a coherent whole. The red of *Rosa* 'Florence Mary Morse' is echoed in ladybird poppies and, later, in *Dahlia* 'Bishop of Llandaff', and the domed heads of *Angelica archangelica* are mirrored in the *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*. Stands of *Miscanthus sinensis* var. *condensatus* 'Cosmopolitan', *Digitalis* and *Thalictrum* 'Elin' add vertical interest.

ANDY'S TIPS ON PLANTING INSPIRED BY GREAT DIXTER

- Use as wide a plant palette as possible – this is fundamental to the Dixter aesthetic. Evergreen trees, deciduous trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, annuals, bulbs – each type of plant brings a certain quality that contributes to the atmosphere in its own way.
- Don't be too bitty. When planting a new garden – especially when it's a smaller space – the tendency is often to be too cautious or delicate, and you can end up with something that feels like an allotment or a stockbed. Fergus would always encourage us to be bold.
- Be observant and discerning. If you decide you want *Symphyotrichum* 'Little Carlow', make sure that's the one you buy and that you don't just settle for whatever aster your local nursery happens to have in stock. Plants are not interchangeable.
- Don't be lazy. If you have an idea, see it through.

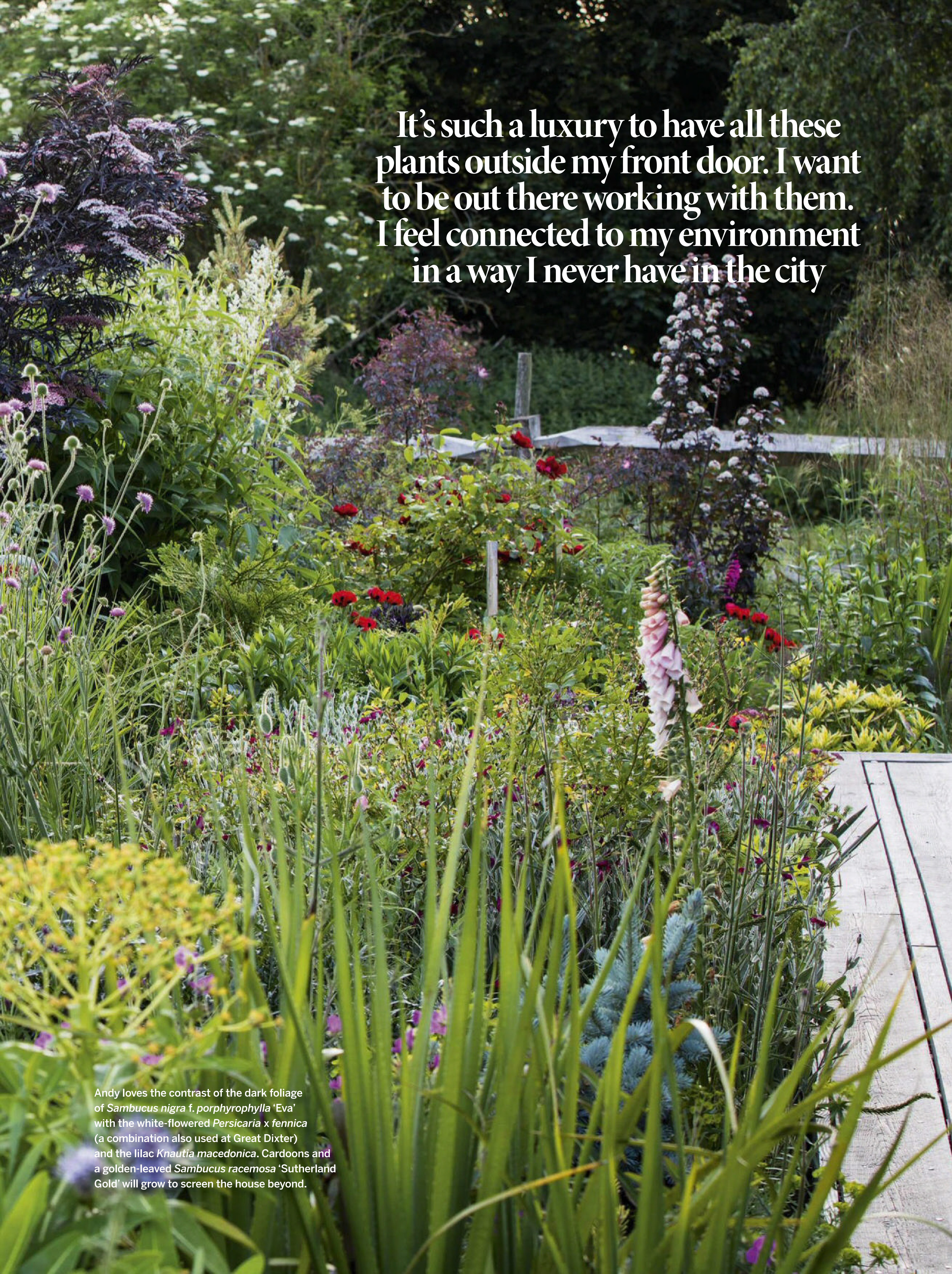
▷ Having dug the entire plot by hand – a feat that took three months at a point when the house still did not have a kitchen – Andy was left with a flat space ringed by a fence. He planted one of his favourite plants – the white-flowered *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' – outside the front door and used that as a starting point, choosing its neighbours for their contrasting characteristics just as Fergus had taught him. Among others, he chose *Aconitum* 'Spark's Variety' for its deep-purple colour, *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Rosea' for its spiky habit and *Allium cristophii* for its earlier flowering season. It was, he says, "about the most fun I've ever had".

In the border to the rear of the house – one long, uninterrupted run – structure was paramount, and so Andy planted trees and shrubs including *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* Black Tower (= 'Eiffel 1'), *Ilex* x *altaclerensis* 'Golden King', *Pinus sylvestris* 'Aurea', *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca Pendula' and various roses, before placing other plants around them. Andy likes herbaceous perennials that are "good both in leaf and after they die back", citing *Calamagrostis brachytricha*, baptisias, bronze fennel and cardoons among his favourites. Bulbs including snowdrops, winter aconites and alliums ('Gladiator', 'Ambassador', *A. hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' and *A. cristophii*) nestle among them and September-sown annuals – ladybird poppies, *Echium vulgare* and cornflowers – add to the throng come early summer.

Maintaining a garden like this takes time. Thanks to his flexible working schedule, Andy estimates that, as the growing season picks up, he spends around 40 hours a week on various tasks. "It's a luxury to have all these plants outside my front door," he says. "I want to be out there working with them. Here, I feel connected to my environment in a way I never have in the city."

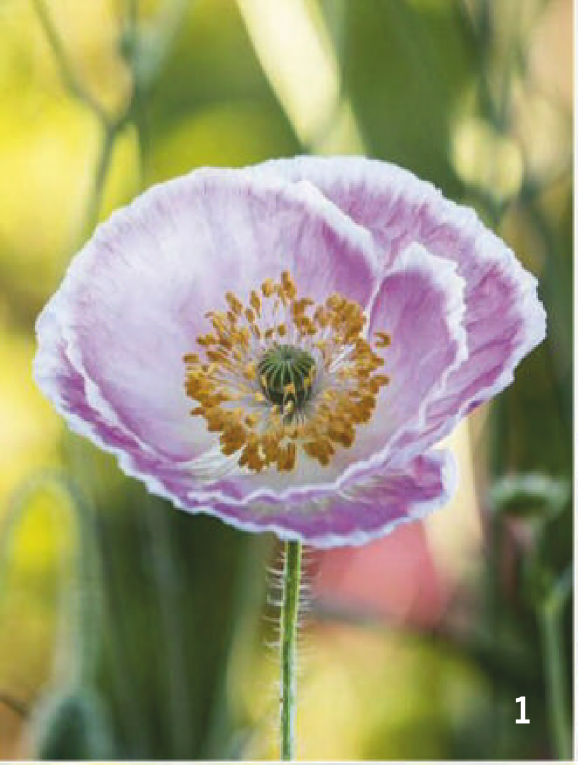
Just as Thoreau discovered that the city offers plenty of distractions but that these aren't necessarily the things we need to nourish us, so Andy believes that in making this garden he has become a new person. "I still can't believe this is where I live," he says. □

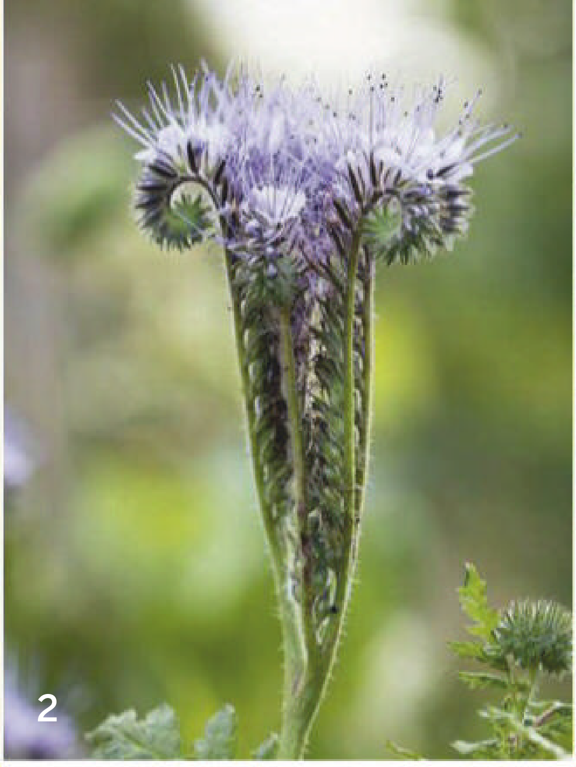
Turn the page for 12 key plants from Andy's garden ▷

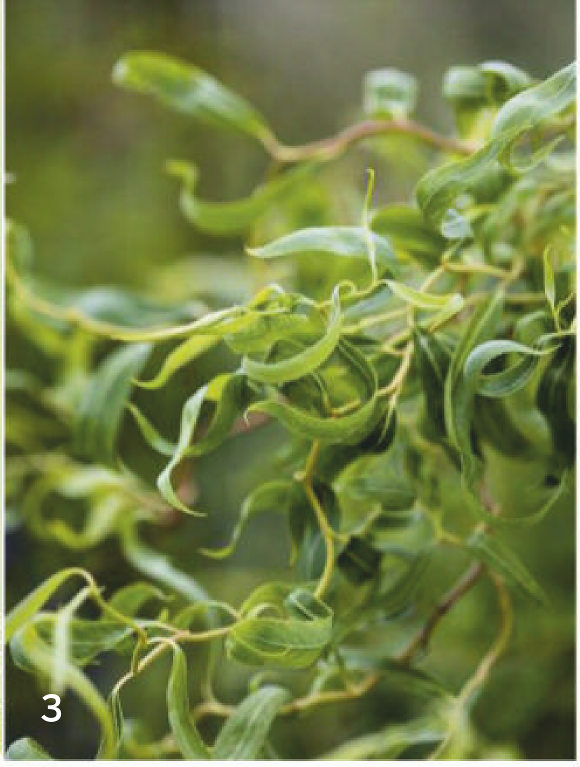


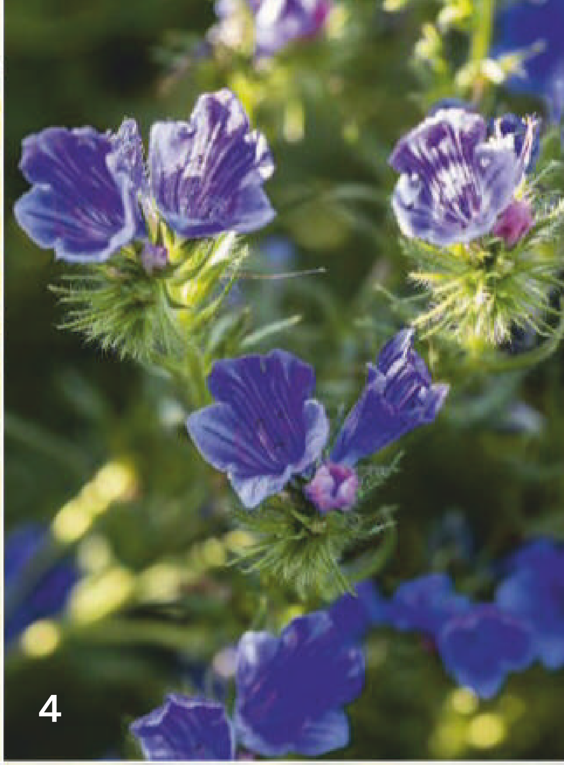
It's such a luxury to have all these plants outside my front door. I want to be out there working with them. I feel connected to my environment in a way I never have in the city

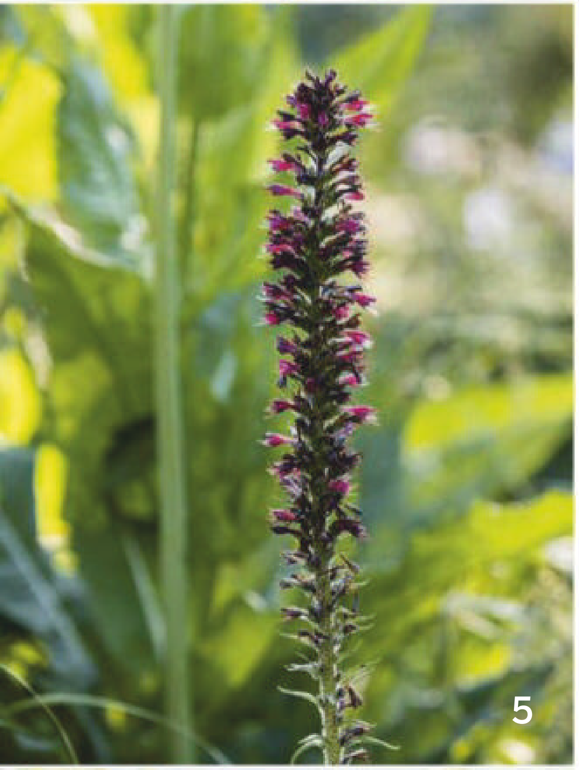
Andy loves the contrast of the dark foliage of *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva' with the white-flowered *Persicaria* x *fennica* (a combination also used at Great Dixter) and the lilac *Knautia macedonica*. Cardoons and a golden-leaved *Sambucus racemosa* 'Sutherland Gold' will grow to screen the house beyond.

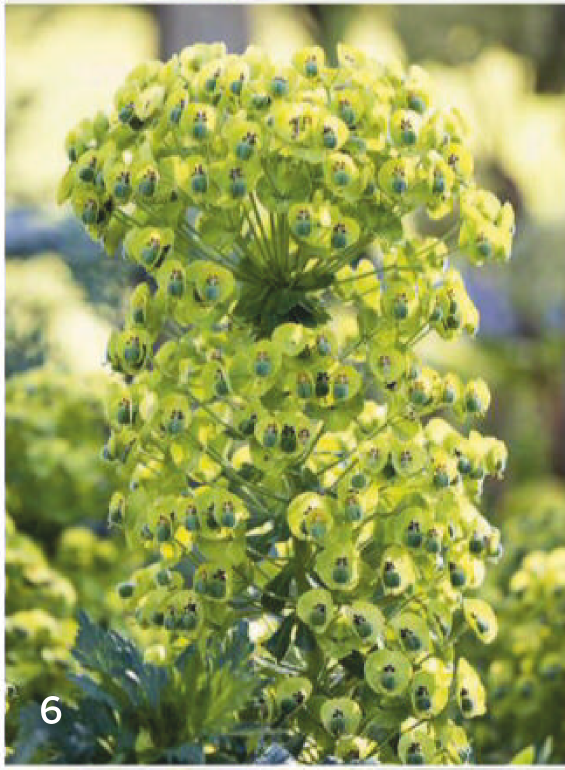


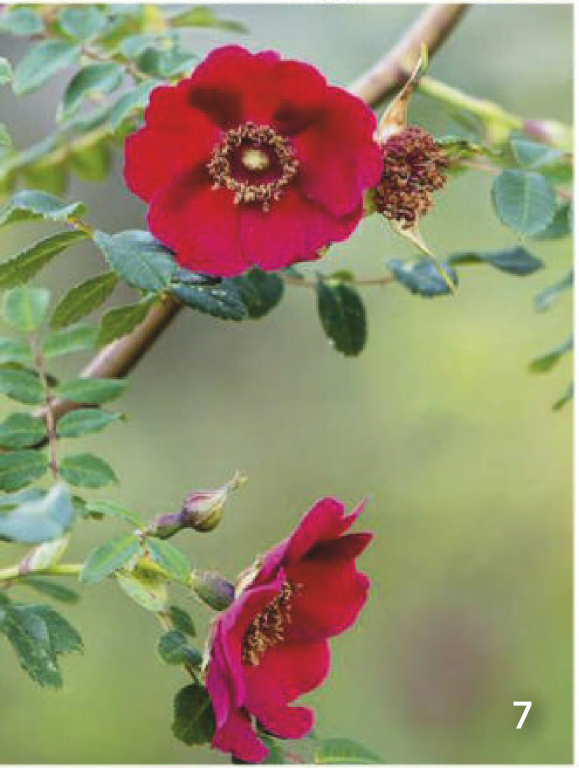


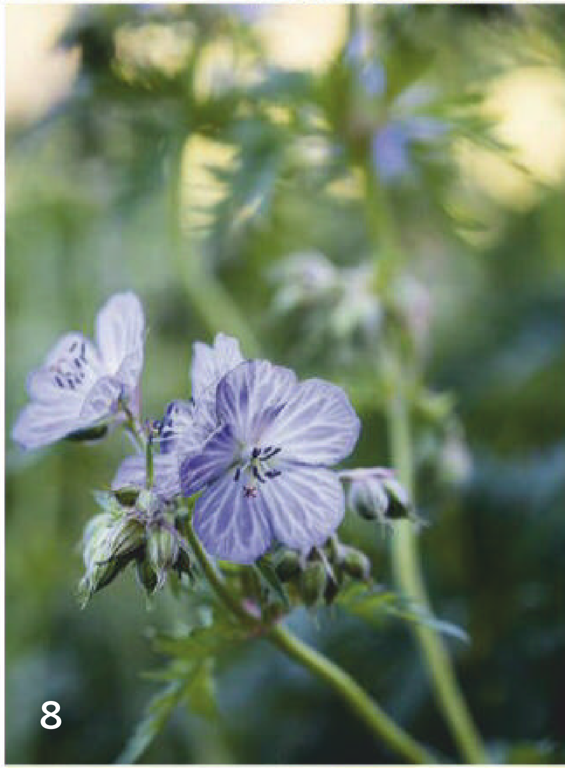












12 KEY PLANTS

1 *Papaver rhoeas* Shirley Group
Raised by the Rev W Wilks in his garden in Shirley near Croydon in the 1880s, the pretty pink and white Shirley poppy is one of the easiest plants to grow. 75cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-10b[†].

2 *Phacelia tanacetifolia*
Initially sown as a green manure, this boisterous annual re-emerges every year in unexpected places with a soft haze of pastel purple. 1.2m. RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b.

3 *Salix* x *sepulcralis* 'Erythroflexuosa'
A large, contorted willow with marmalade-coloured bark maturing to a dark brown, and gently curving, narrow, green leaves. 5m. AGM[*]. RHS H5.

4 *Echium vulgare* 'Blue Bedder'
Blooming from May, from a September sowing, this small cultivar offers months of brilliant-blue flowers held on crowded spikes. Loved by pollinating insects. 45cm. AGM. RHS H7.

5 *Echium russicum*
A rather stark biennial with a wild, unvarnished magnetism. Sow mid-summer and plant in late autumn if soil is well-drained or, otherwise, in spring. Good in large sweeps of temporary bedding. 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b.

6 *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*
Sturdy yet nimble, shrubby yet herbaceous, this euphorbia offers striking form and colour for much of the year. 1.25m. RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b.

7 *Rosa moyesii*
A rigid framework erupts into plentiful, modestly sized,deep-crimson blooms in early summer. Don't pinch off the spent flowers if you want to enjoy the flagon-shaped hips. 4m. RHS H6.

8 *Geranium pratense* 'Mrs Kendall Clark'
Violet petals, vividly veined with cream, sing out from a distance, whether this is allowed to self-seed in a meadow or used as a more deliberate collaborator. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7.

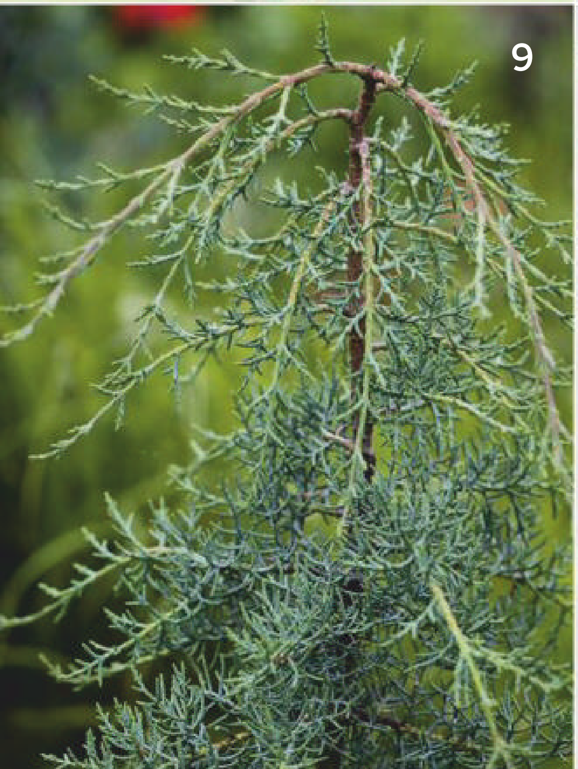
9 *Cupressus arizonica* var. *glabra* 'Blue Ice'
A vigorous cypress with wispy looking, blue foliage, which brings a cool tone to a composition, and complements the periwinkle blue of *Aster* x *frikartii* 'Mönch'. +12m. RHS H5.

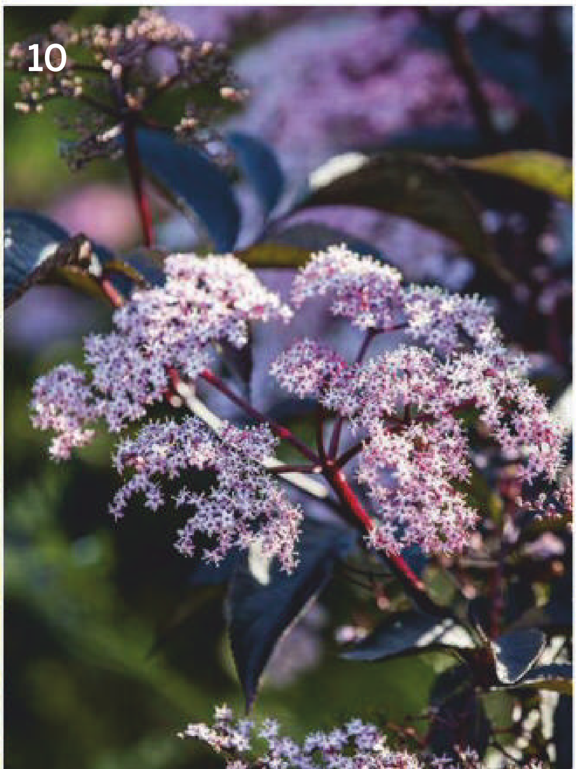
10 *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva'
Finely cut dark foliage, an elegant form and rich plummy umbels in June make this an invaluable shrub. Its wingspan is impressive too. 3m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

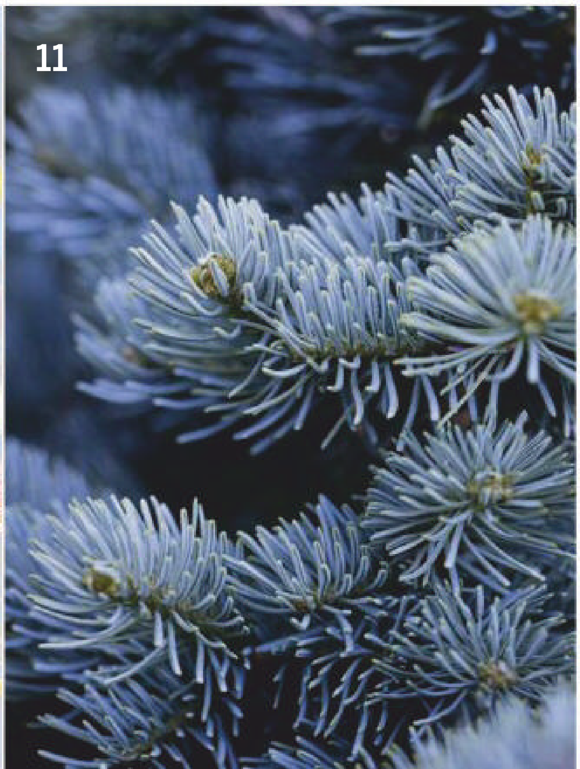
11 *Abies lasiocarpa* 'Glauca Compacta'
Vivid-blue foliage is the primary asset of this small fir. Associates well with the equally compact *Euphorbia seguieriana* subsp. *niciciana*. 1m. RHS H7.

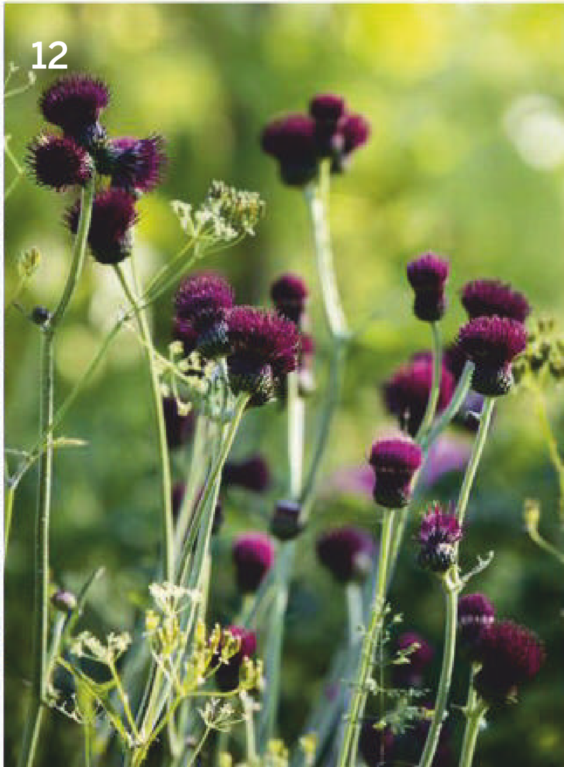
12 *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum'
Wine-dark pompoms on branching stems make this dark-flowered form of the wild thistle a useful and semi-unpredictable, secondary ingredient in the garden. 1.25m. AGM. RHS H7.

[*] Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.

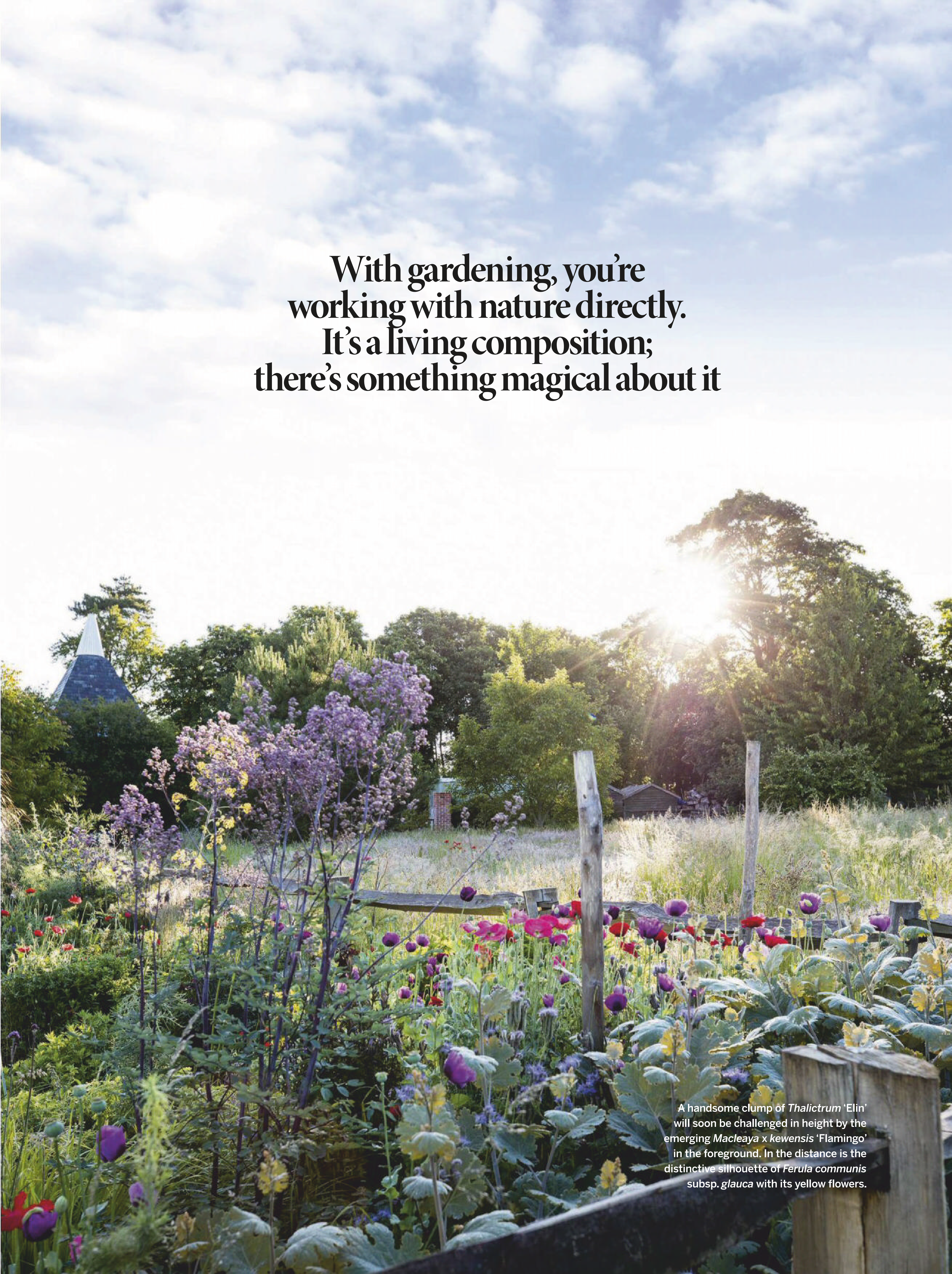








With gardening, you're working with nature directly. It's a living composition; there's something magical about it

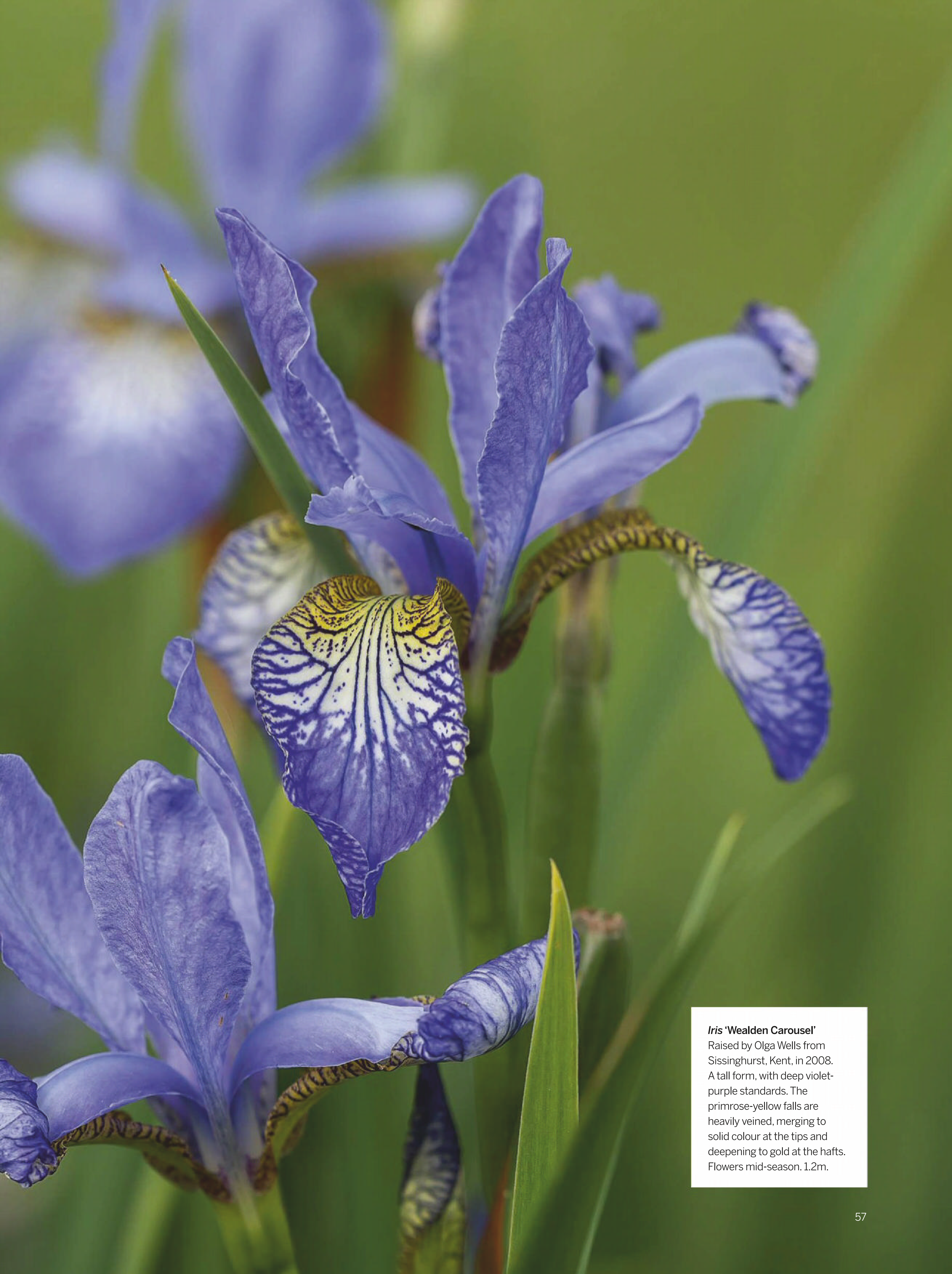


A handsome clump of *Thalictrum* 'Elin' will soon be challenged in height by the emerging *Macleaya* x *kewensis* 'Flamingo' in the foreground. In the distance is the distinctive silhouette of *Ferula communis* subsp. *glauca* with its yellow flowers.

SIBERIAN IRISES

New breeding has intensified the colour range of Siberian irises. Head gardener Troy Scott Smith selects the best for brief but glorious flowering

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH PHOTOGRAPHS DIANNA JAZWINSKI



***Iris* 'Wealden Carousel'**
Raised by Olga Wells from Sissinghurst, Kent, in 2008. A tall form, with deep violet-purple standards. The primrose-yellow falls are heavily veined, merging to solid colour at the tips and deepening to gold at the hafts. Flowers mid-season. 1.2m.

I have known Siberian irises ever since I was a child in Yorkshire and we moved to a house in the countryside. It was May and the garden was surrounded by fields bordered with ancient ash pollards and woolly hedges of hawthorn frothing in the breeze with great billowing clouds of flowers. The garden was full of cottage garden flowers, and standing with their heads and shoulders above the crowd were several large groups of an unidentified form of steely blue-flowered *Iris sibirica*. It was a beautiful sight as the sunlight caught flashes of gold in the flowers' throats above a darker undercurrent of *Geranium phaeum* teamed with just the right amount of discord from the acid-yellow flowers of *Alchemilla mollis*. The overriding impression on that day, 38 years ago, was one of great beauty, and since then I have experimented with growing many different forms of this most elegant and easy-going iris.

I love the verticality of their simple stems, the structured lines they provide in the fecundity of the spring border, and the fact that despite bulking up quickly they tend to stay where they are put. Flowering is brief but glorious, but they are grown as much for their narrow, grass-like, architectural foliage as for their flowers.

Siberian irises have been grown in British gardens since the late 16th century, and have naturalised here and in other temperate regions. Most garden selections are from *I. sibirica* and *I. sanguinea* and their hybrids. *I. sibirica* is found mainly in central Europe, although it is now vulnerable in Czechia, Hungary and Ukraine; extinct in Slovakia, and rare and endangered in Poland. *I. sanguinea* is found from Russia to Japan and Korea. But it is botany more than geography that links these two closely related species. Both have many similarities but some differences. *I. sibirica* has branched flowering stems with five to seven flowers per stem, held clear of the leaves, while *I. sanguinea* has unbranched stems with one or occasionally two flowers per stem; hybrids exhibit traits from both.

Although natural breeding and selection have influenced the Siberian iris, the real changes to flower size and habit occurred when the American breeder Currier McEwen created tetraploid plants in the 1960s. This technique, first used on hemerocallis, doubles the chromosome count, creating more robust plants with stronger stems and larger, sturdier flowers. It also enriched and intensified the colour range of flowers available, as with *I.* 'Lavendelwein' and 'Silver Edge'. Pre-tetraploid forms, such as the classic *I.* 'White Swirl', typically have narrower foliage and thinner stems holding several delicate flowers that constantly move and flutter. While I was head gardener at Sissinghurst, I took advantage of this quality in the White Garden where I grew the pure, unadulterated 'White Swirl' by the bucket-load in tandem with the foaming flowers of *Anthriscus sylvestris*. Illuminated by the fullness of a May moon, the effect was magical.

All Siberian iris are easy-going and perform well in most average garden soils, but for best results provide a rich soil containing liberal amounts of organic material, with a mildly acidic pH of between 6 and 7, but they will often succeed elsewhere. They prefer a sunny situation but will tolerate partial shade if they get a few hours of full sun each day. Like most irises, Siberians are hungry plants and so a balanced fertiliser, applied at a ratio of 35 grams for every square metre, should be applied in March and then again after flowering will help.

Thinking about successional planting, I like to add narcissus bulbs in and around clumps of Siberian irises. Light-limbed types, such as *N. pseudonarcissus*, or the wild-looking ones, such as *N.* 'Actaea' (a beautiful, red-eyed narcissus, similar to pheasant's eye) work best, as their foliage is discrete and quickly hidden by the expanding leaves of the irises. You could also try adding something that flowers earlier, such as snowdrops; again, their fading foliage will be conveniently hidden first by the narcissi and then the irises. For later interest, and contrast of leaf form, try planting the fern *Polystichum setiferum* nearby. ❑

• Troy Scott Smith is head gardener at Iford Manor in Wiltshire. His recommendations for the best Siberian irises can be found over the next five pages.

PLANT PROFILE

What Siberian irises are rhizomatous herbaceous perennials with narrow, grassy foliage. The branched stems bear up to five violet-blue flowers, 6-7cm wide, in early summer. Iris flowers are made up of standards (three upright petals) and falls (the three lower petals that flare out), which in Siberian irises are often veined purple-white. The haft (the base of the falls where they begin to narrow) is generally golden yellow. Some also have what is known as a signal – a bright spot of contrasting colour flaring out from the haft at the base of the fall

Origins Most garden cultivars are hybrids of *I. sanguinea*, from Russia, Mongolia, China, Japan and Korea, and *I. sibirica*, from Europe and Central Asia.

Season Flowers from mid-May to end of June. Older cultivars tend to flower earlier.

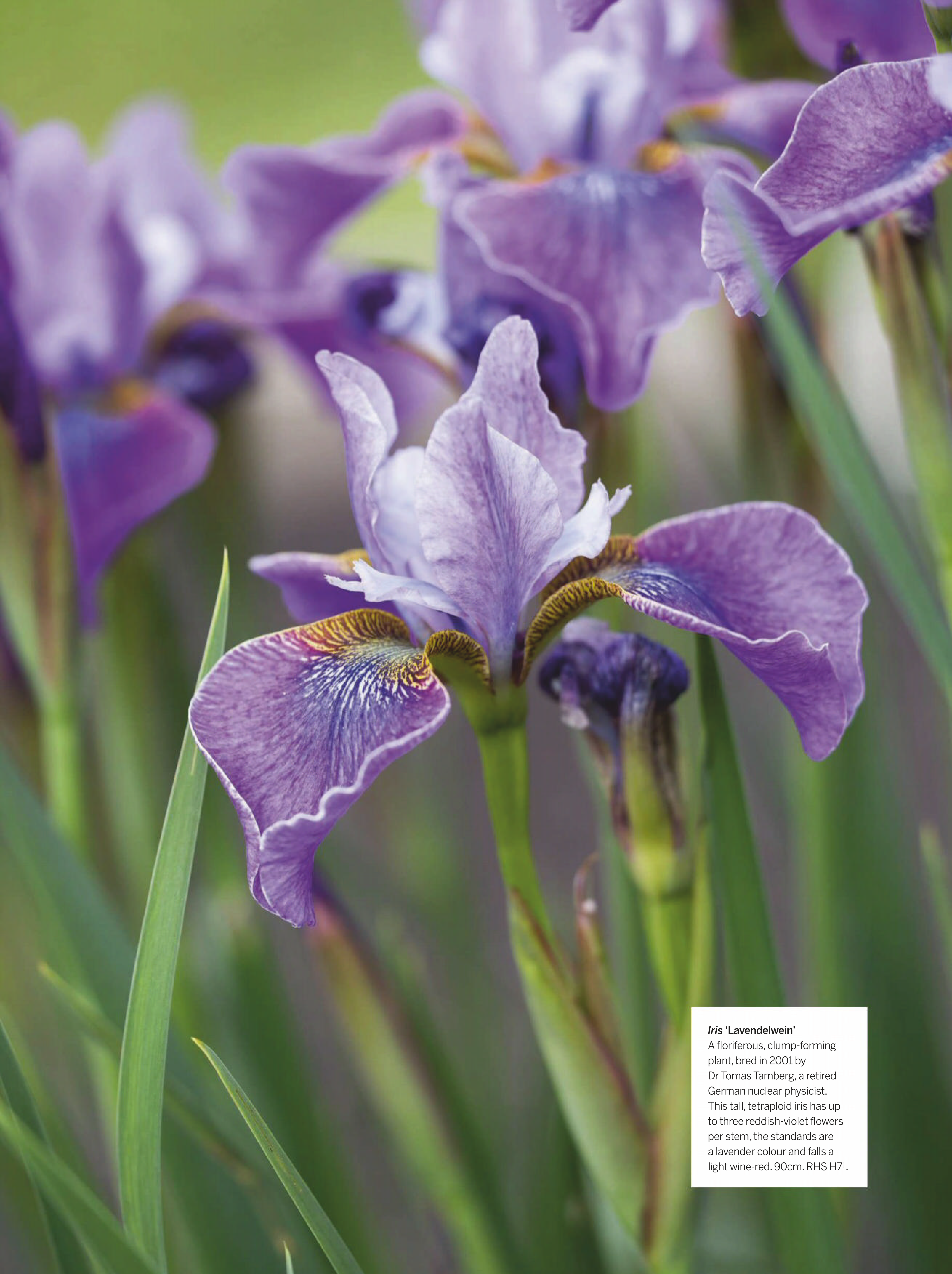
Size Stems up to 1.2m tall.

Conditions Best grown in good light without too much competition from neighbouring plants.

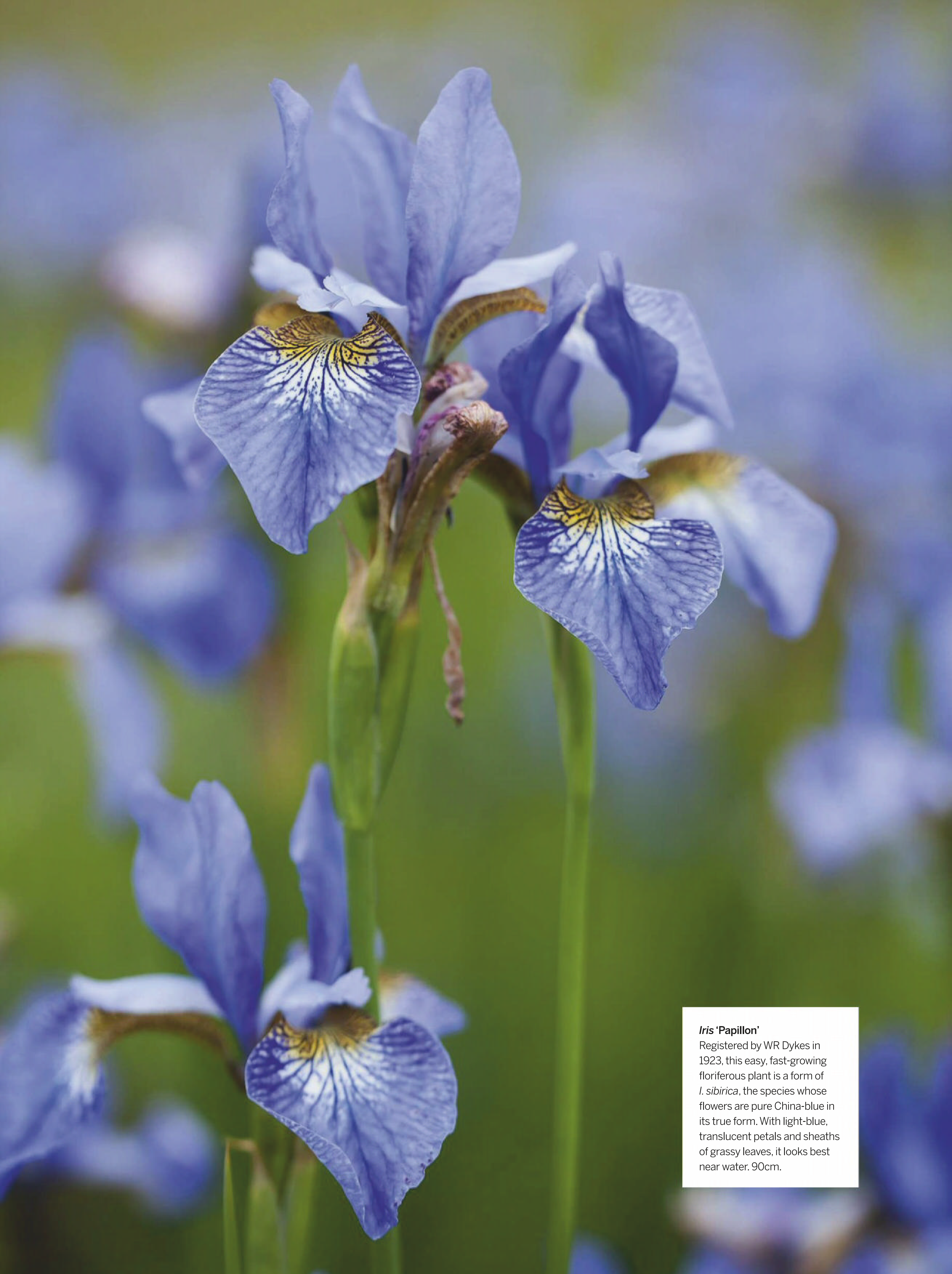
Hardiness These are very hardy plants. All have with an RHS hardiness rating of H7 and are suitable for gardens in USDA zones 3a to 9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

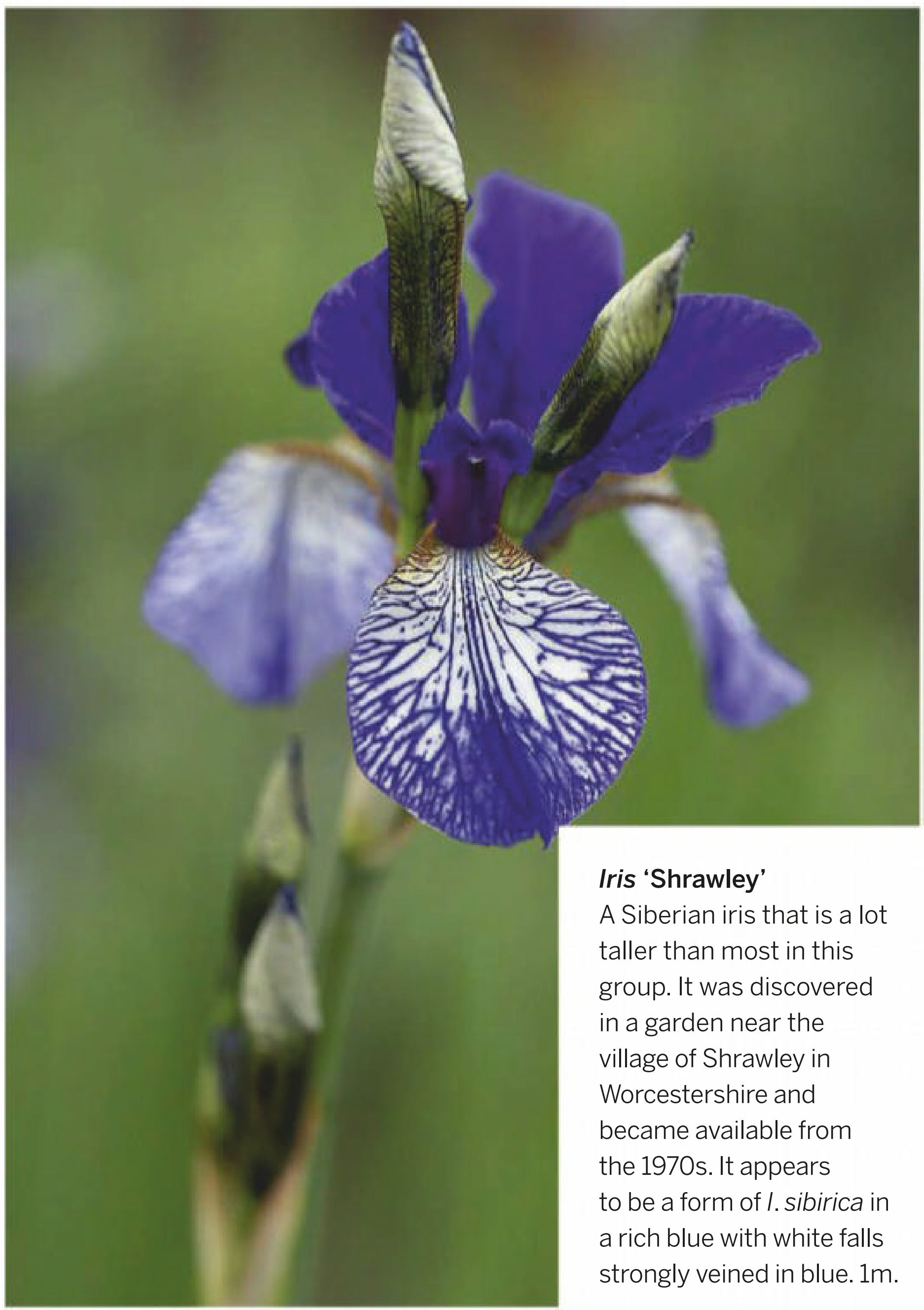
Parham House & Gardens
Most of the images for this month's plant profile were taken at Parham House & Gardens in West Sussex, which is renowned for its colourful herbaceous borders.
parhaminsussex.co.uk



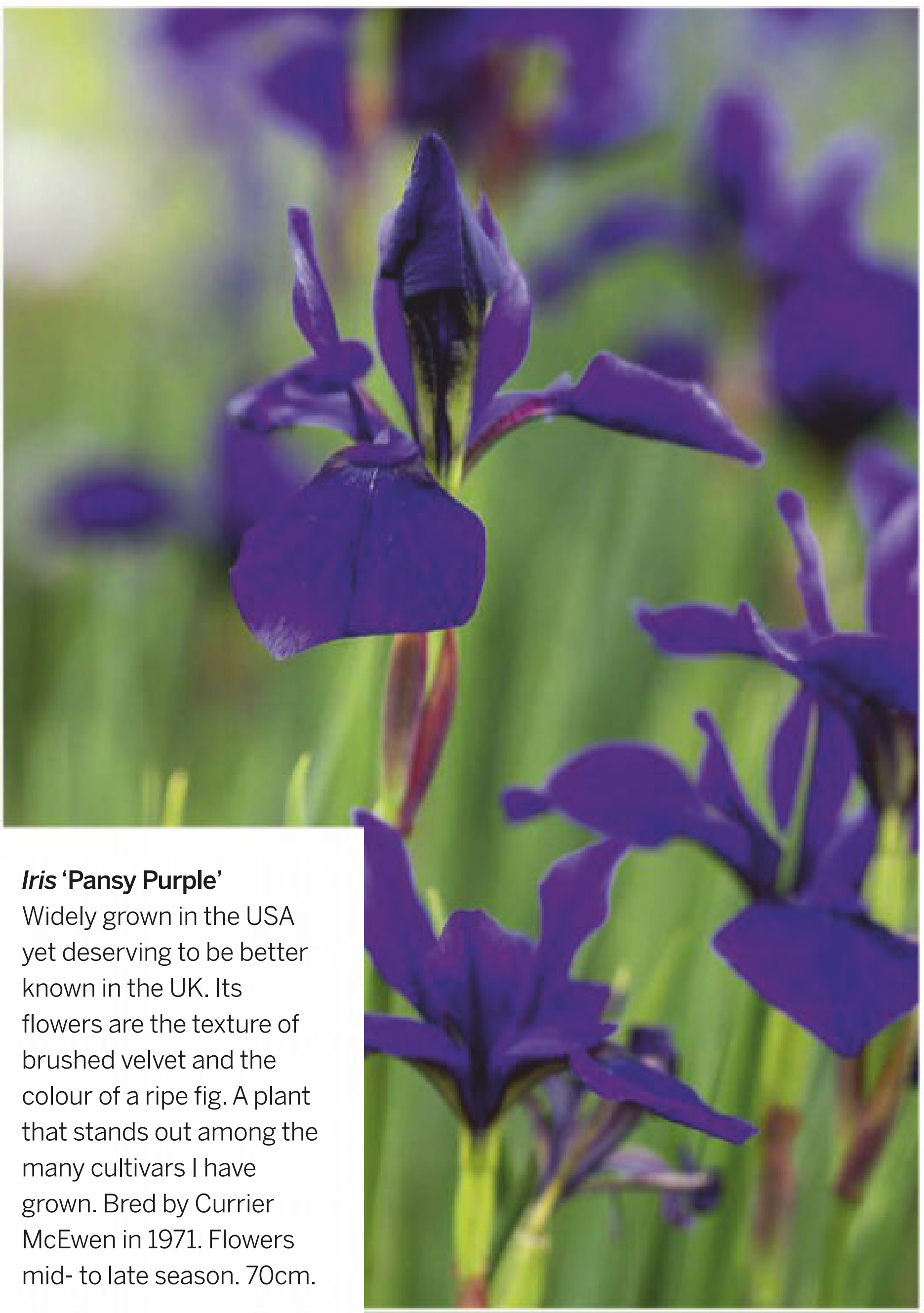
***Iris* ‘Lavendelwein’**
A floriferous, clump-forming plant, bred in 2001 by Dr Tomas Tamberg, a retired German nuclear physicist. This tall, tetraploid iris has up to three reddish-violet flowers per stem, the standards are a lavender colour and falls a light wine-red. 90cm. RHS H7[†].



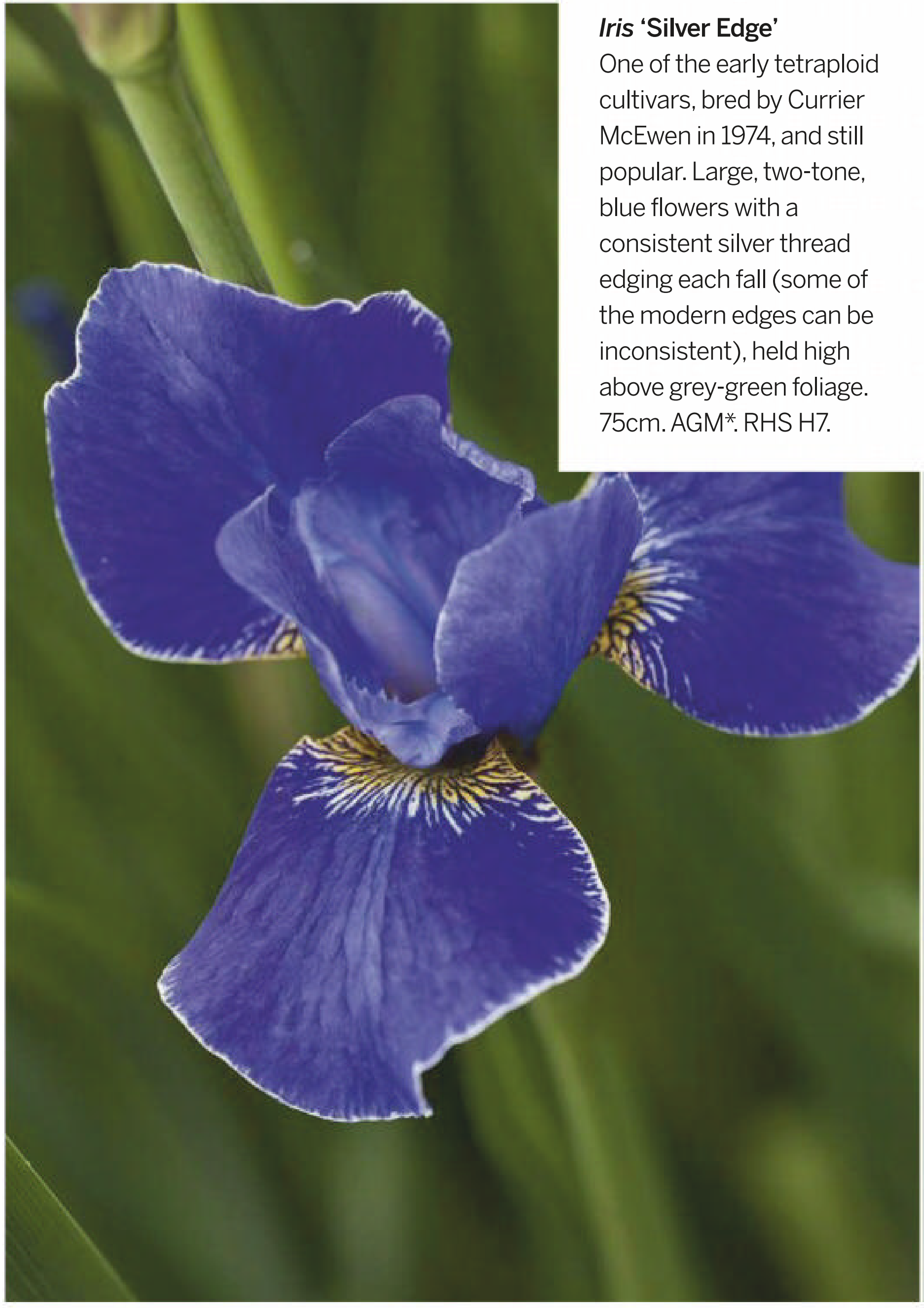
***Iris* 'Papillon'**
Registered by WR Dykes in 1923, this easy, fast-growing floriferous plant is a form of *I. sibirica*, the species whose flowers are pure China-blue in its true form. With light-blue, translucent petals and sheaths of grassy leaves, it looks best near water. 90cm.



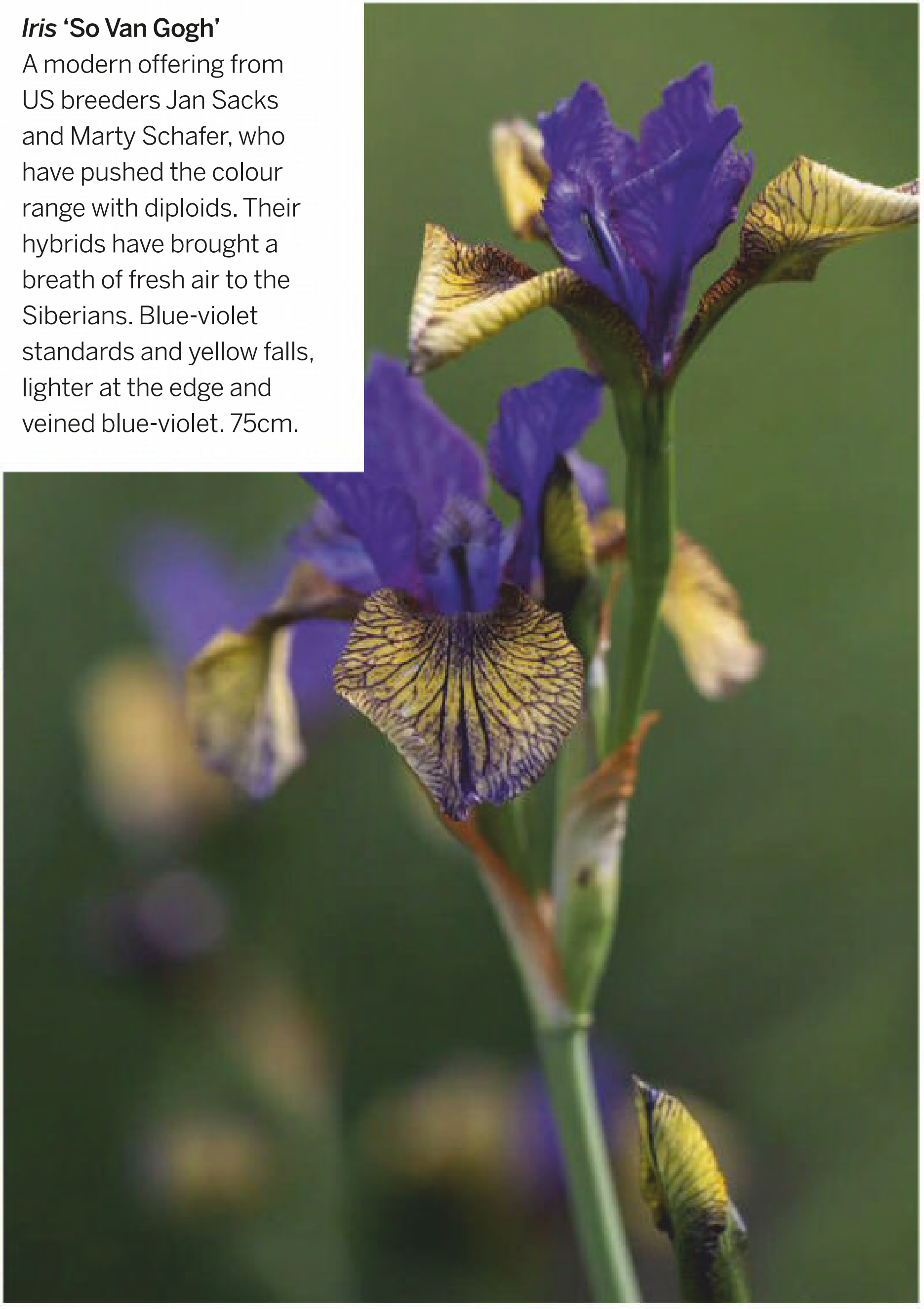
***Iris* ‘Shrawley’**
A Siberian iris that is a lot taller than most in this group. It was discovered in a garden near the village of Shrawley in Worcestershire and became available from the 1970s. It appears to be a form of *I. sibirica* in a rich blue with white falls strongly veined in blue. 1m.



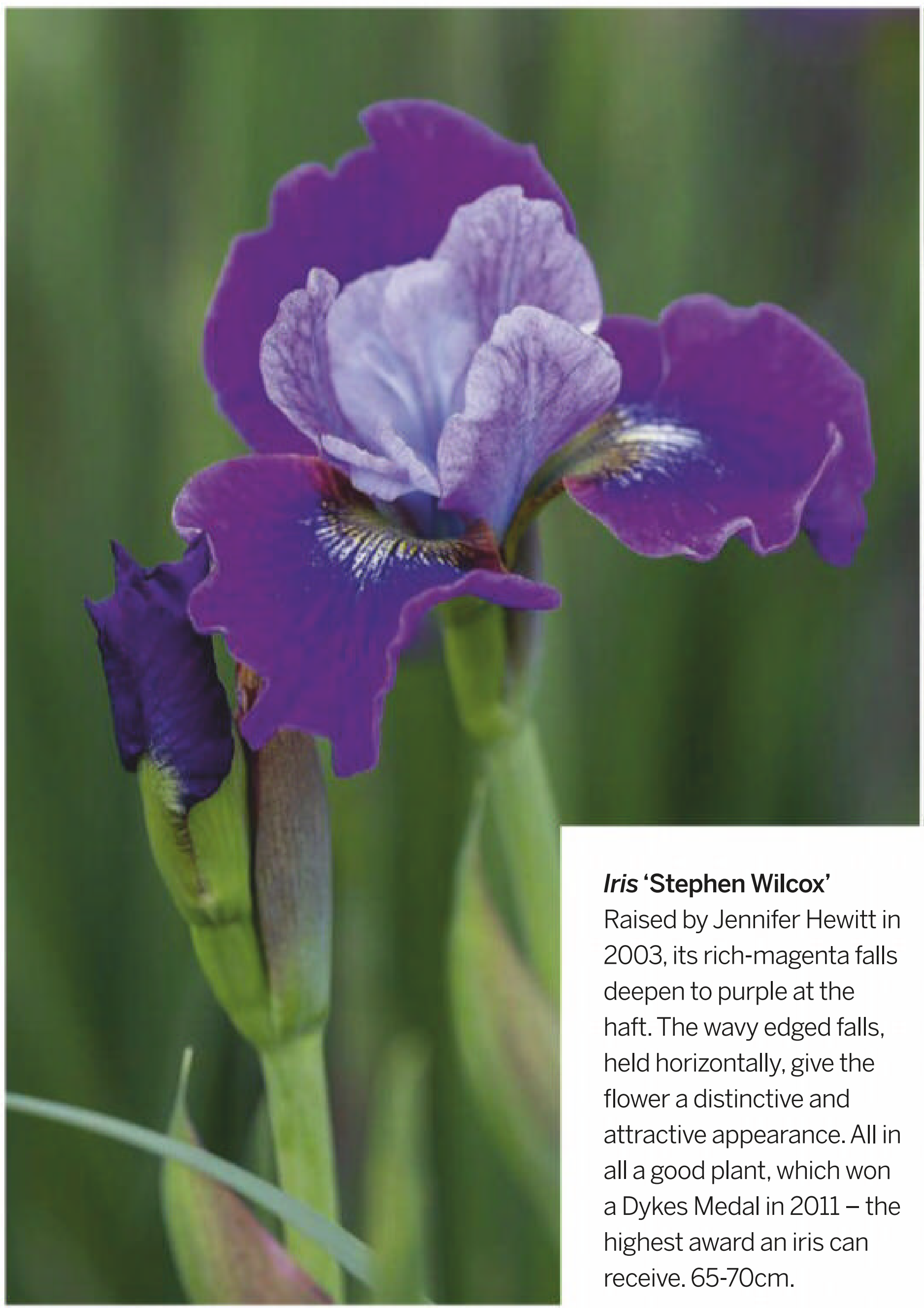
***Iris* ‘Pansy Purple’**
Widely grown in the USA yet deserving to be better known in the UK. Its flowers are the texture of brushed velvet and the colour of a ripe fig. A plant that stands out among the many cultivars I have grown. Bred by Currier McEwen in 1971. Flowers mid- to late season. 70cm.



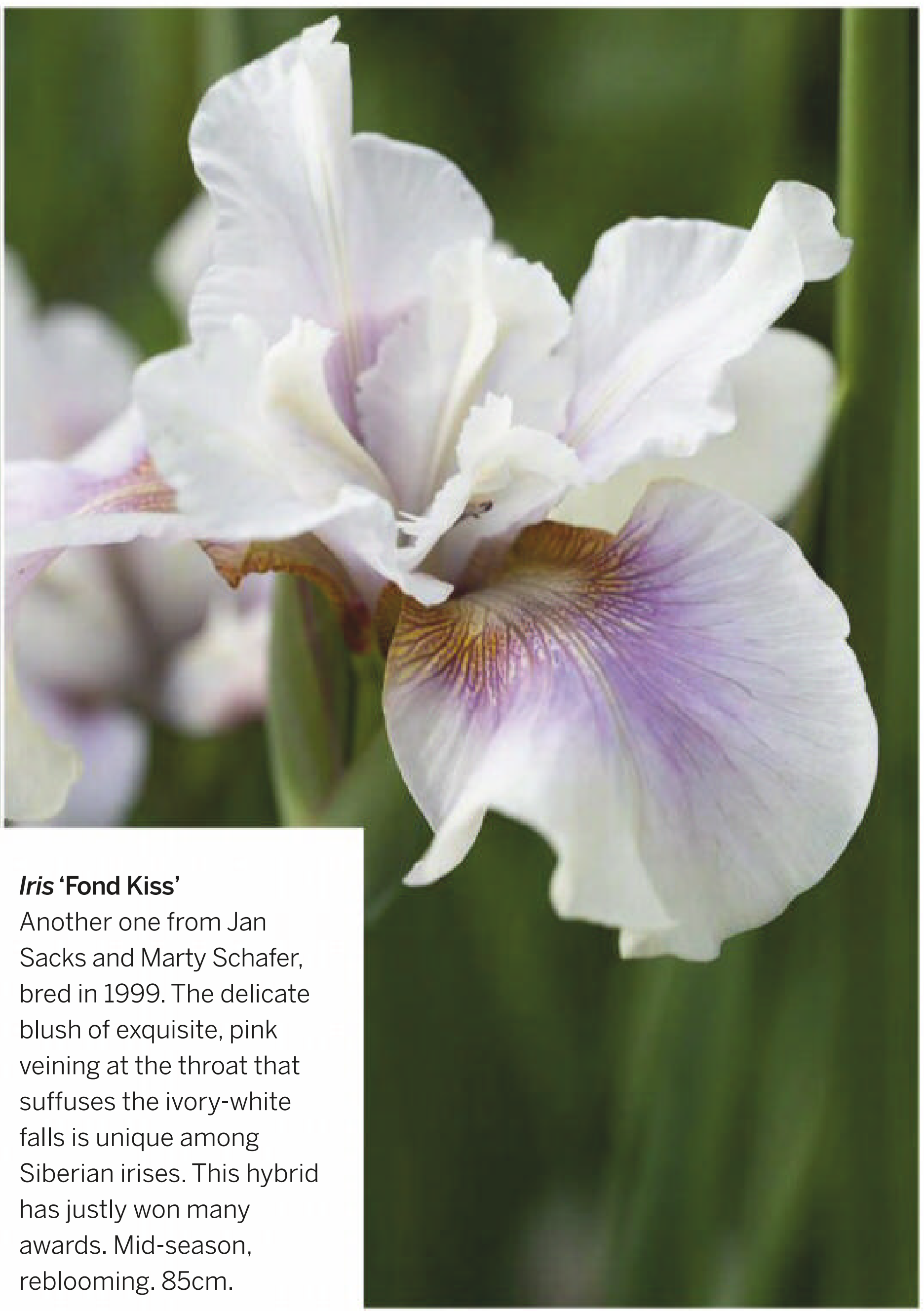
***Iris* ‘Silver Edge’**
One of the early tetraploid cultivars, bred by Currier McEwen in 1974, and still popular. Large, two-tone, blue flowers with a consistent silver thread edging each fall (some of the modern edges can be inconsistent), held high above grey-green foliage. 75cm. AGM*. RHS H7.



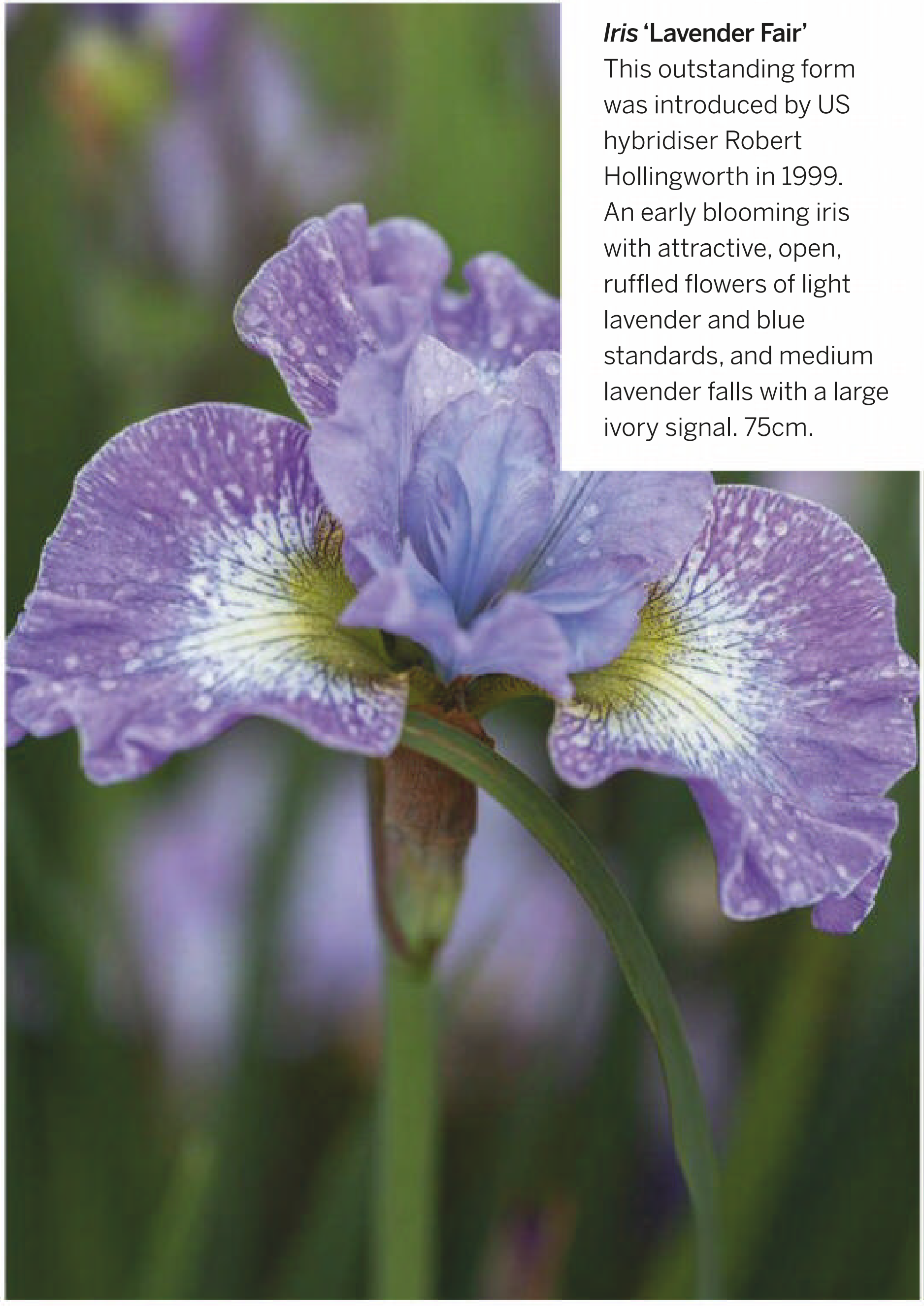
***Iris* ‘So Van Gogh’**
A modern offering from US breeders Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer, who have pushed the colour range with diploids. Their hybrids have brought a breath of fresh air to the Siberians. Blue-violet standards and yellow falls, lighter at the edge and veined blue-violet. 75cm.



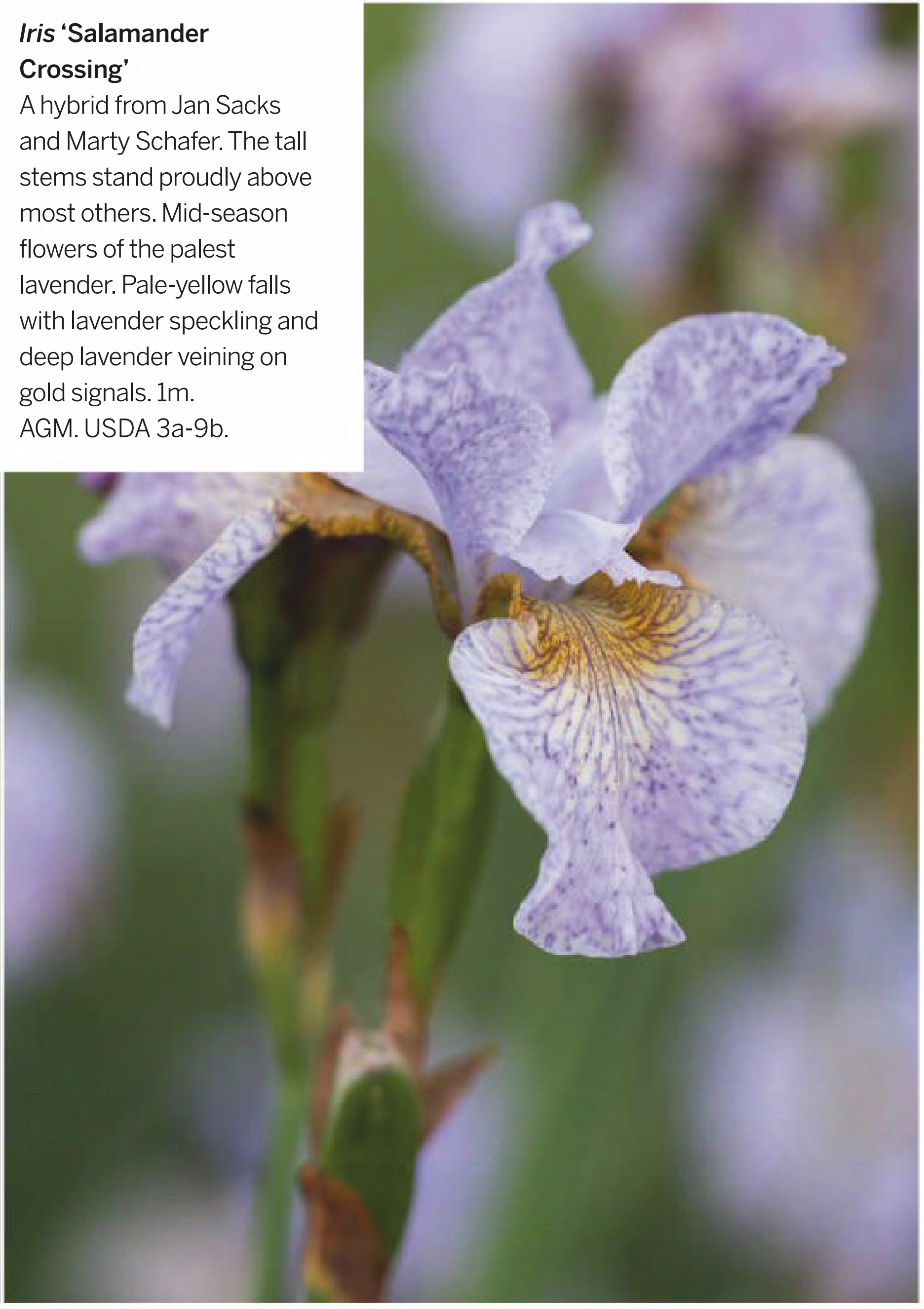
***Iris* 'Stephen Wilcox'**
Raised by Jennifer Hewitt in 2003, its rich-magenta falls deepen to purple at the haft. The wavy edged falls, held horizontally, give the flower a distinctive and attractive appearance. All in all a good plant, which won a Dykes Medal in 2011 – the highest award an iris can receive. 65-70cm.



***Iris* 'Fond Kiss'**
Another one from Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer, bred in 1999. The delicate blush of exquisite, pink veining at the throat that suffuses the ivory-white falls is unique among Siberian irises. This hybrid has justly won many awards. Mid-season, reblooming. 85cm.

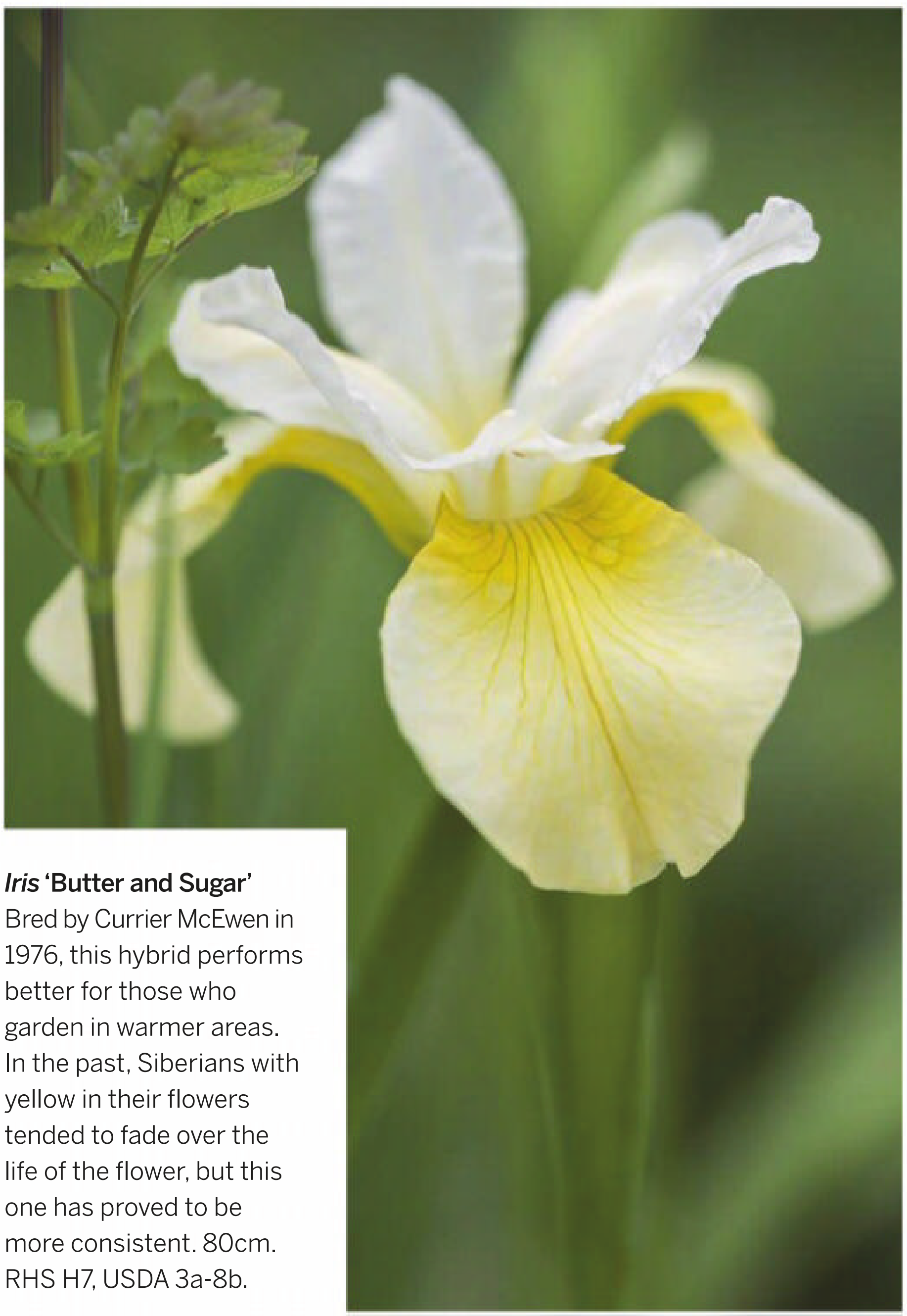


***Iris* 'Lavender Fair'**
This outstanding form was introduced by US hybridiser Robert Hollingworth in 1999. An early blooming iris with attractive, open, ruffled flowers of light lavender and blue standards, and medium lavender falls with a large ivory signal. 75cm.

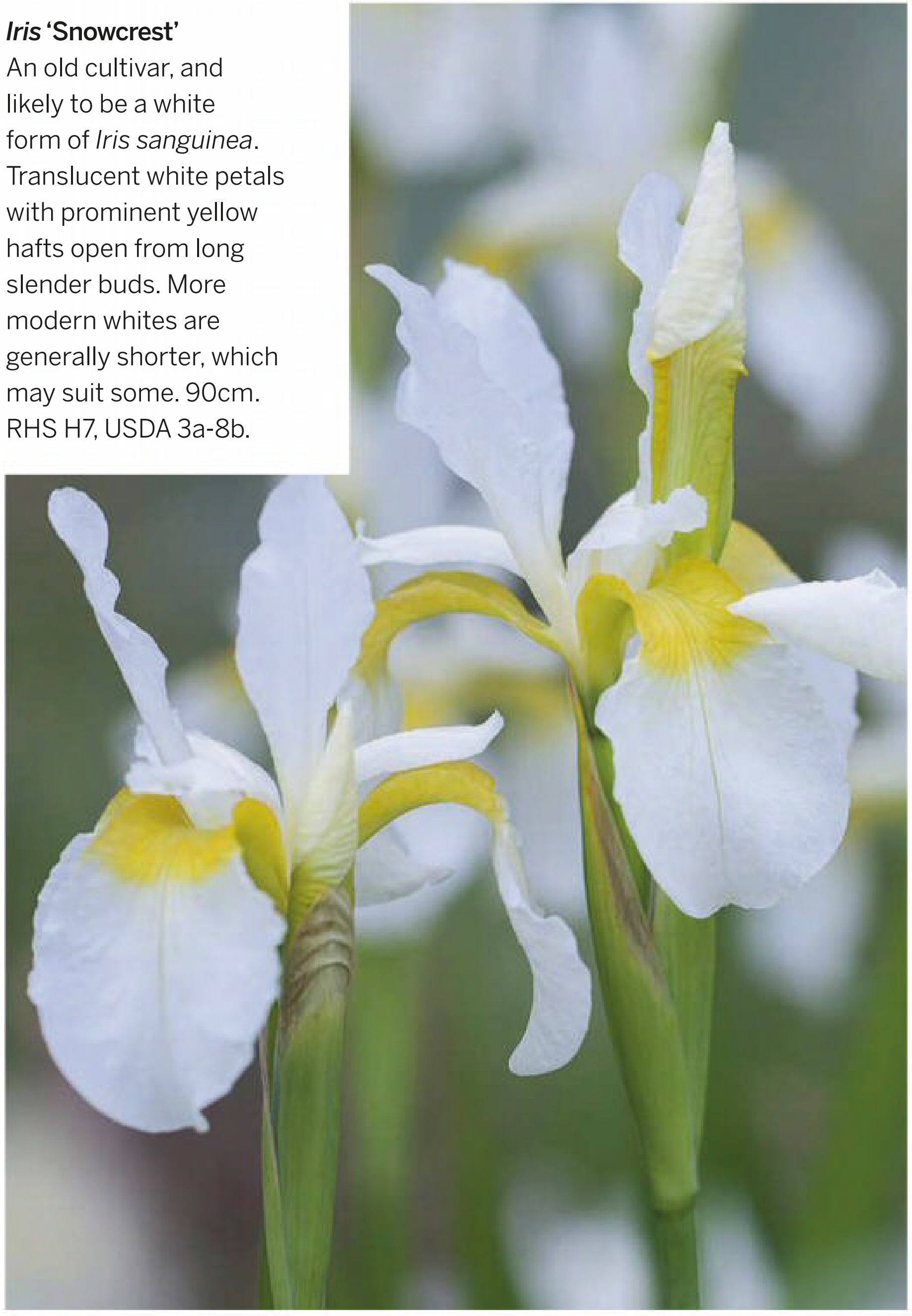


***Iris* 'Salamander Crossing'**
A hybrid from Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer. The tall stems stand proudly above most others. Mid-season flowers of the palest lavender. Pale-yellow falls with lavender speckling and deep lavender veining on gold signals. 1m. AGM. USDA 3a-9b.

MANY THANKS TO LILIES WATER GARDENS IN SURREY WHERE SOME OF THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN, AND TO ALUN AND JILL WHITEHEAD AT AULDEN FARM FOR THEIR HELP WITH THIS FEATURE.



Iris 'Butter and Sugar'
Bred by Currier McEwen in 1976, this hybrid performs better for those who garden in warmer areas. In the past, Siberians with yellow in their flowers tended to fade over the life of the flower, but this one has proved to be more consistent. 80cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.



Iris 'Snowcrest'
An old cultivar, and likely to be a white form of *Iris sanguinea*. Translucent white petals with prominent yellow hafts open from long slender buds. More modern whites are generally shorter, which may suit some. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

Cultivation

Unlike bearded irises, Siberian irises can be treated like any other perennial, so when a clump becomes shy flowering you should lift, divide and replant. Palm-sized clumps are best for transplanting; smaller divisions can take up to two years to reach a size where they will flower. Carefully dig up the rhizomes with a garden fork and cut down the leaves to a short fan (the roots must be kept moist while the plants are out of the ground). Plant the rhizomes at least 5cm deep (slightly deeper in sandy soils) and at 30-45cm spacing depending on desired effect. Spring is the best time to divide, with August as an alternative. If growing in well-drained soil, then water until they are established. Once their roots are down, they usually look after themselves. It's best not to replant when frosts are likely; you can expect losses if you lift and divide during late autumn or winter.

Although cultivars can only be vegetatively propagated, it is possible to raise plants from seed, and you will get a range of interesting, colourful, good garden plants within just a few years. To start your seeds indoors, you will need to cold stratify them. First soak the seeds for three to five days, then place them in a plastic bag with moist vermiculite and pop the bag in the fridge for up to 60 days (check the moisture level of the vermiculite periodically). After 60 days, some of your seeds may already have sprouted. The rest will germinate within days of being removed from the refrigerator, prick out when large enough to handle into rigid plug trays and on into 9cm pots. The plants will flower within three years after sowing. Alternatively, you can sow seeds in December to February and place in a cold greenhouse or polytunnel and germination should be straightforward. The flowers are hermaphroditic (meaning they have both male and female organs) and are generally pollinated by insects, although self fertilisation is possible.

Out of flowering the plant still has much to offer from its foliage and attractive seedpods. At The Courts Garden in Wiltshire I grew a whole bed of an unknown Siberian iris flanking a formal pool. I cut the foliage of these, much like one might with geraniums or aquilegias, in late June all the way to ground. Within days new leaves emerged, which remained green and fresh looking until the first frosts in October. By doing this however, I sacrificed the seedpods, now I tend to leave both the foliage and spent flower stalks until they turn brown in autumn or even the following spring when they have collapsed. From August the elongated green seedpods will begin to harden and turn first tan then brown as they ripen before slowly rupturing and 'unzipping' themselves from the tip down allowing the seed to disperse or be collected.

Where to see and buy

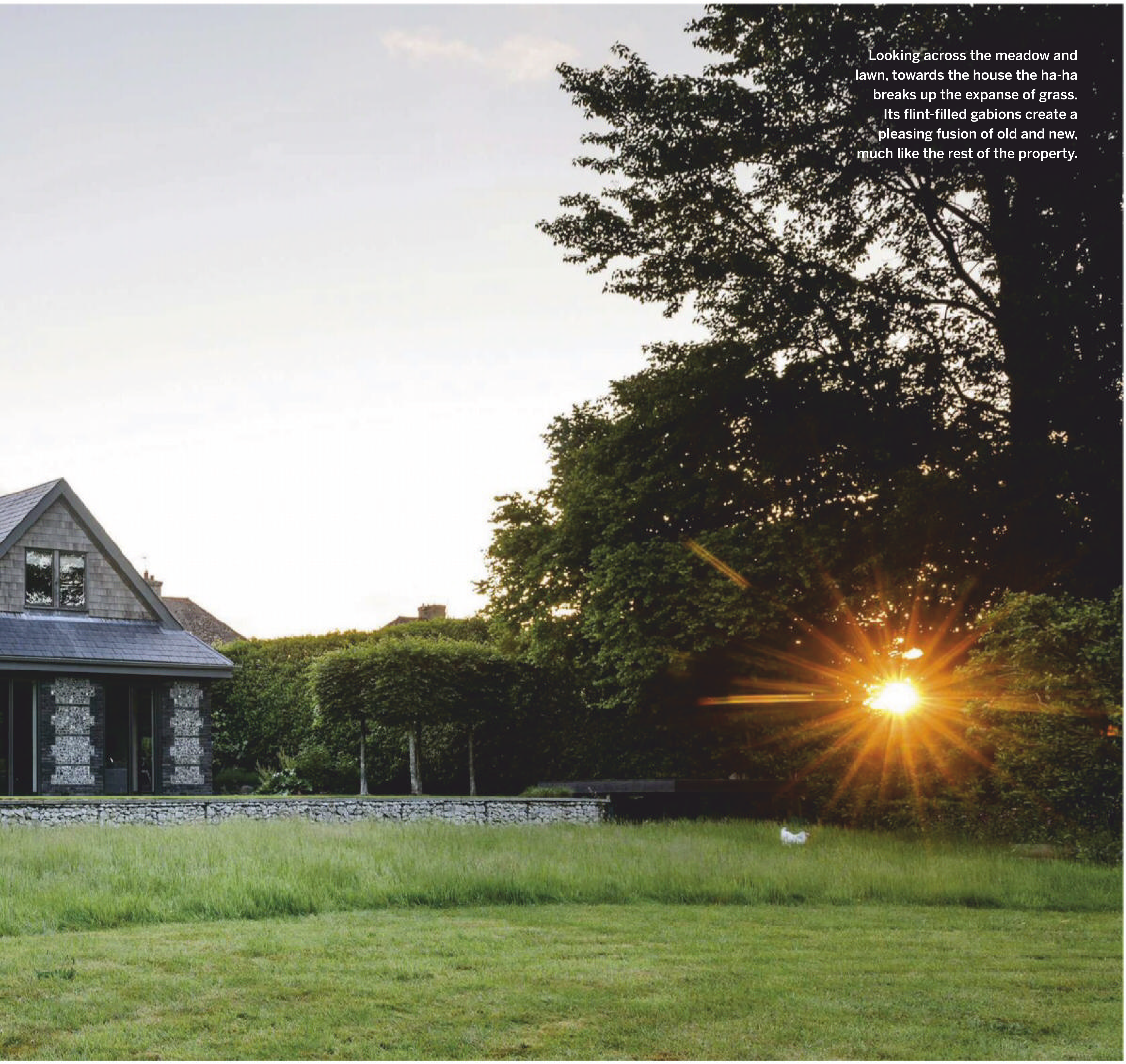
- **Aulden Farm***
  Leominster,
  Herefordshire HR6 0JT.
  Tel 01568 720129,
  auldenfarm.co.uk
  Opens for NGS.
- **The Gobbett Nursery**
  Farlow, Kidderminster,
  Worcestershire DY14 8TD.
  Tel 01746 718647,
  thegobbettnursery.co.uk
- **Lilies Water Gardens**
  Broad Lane, Newdigate,
  Surrey RH5 5AT.
  Tel 01306 631064,
  lilieswatergardens.co.uk
- **The Manic Botanic**
  Online nursery.
  Tel 07790 193722,
  themanicbotanic.co.uk
- **Parham House & Gardens**
  Parham Park, Pulborough,
  West Sussex RH20 4HS.
  Tel 01903 742021,
  parhaminsussex.co.uk
- **Wootens of Wenhaston**
  The Iris Field, Hall Road,
  Wenhaston, Suffolk IP19 9HF.
  Tel 01502 478258,
  woottensplants.com

*National Collection holder

In collaboration

In the tranquil surroundings of rural West Sussex, a new house and garden are growing together in pleasing synchronicity

WORDS BENJAMIN WILLIAM POPE PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



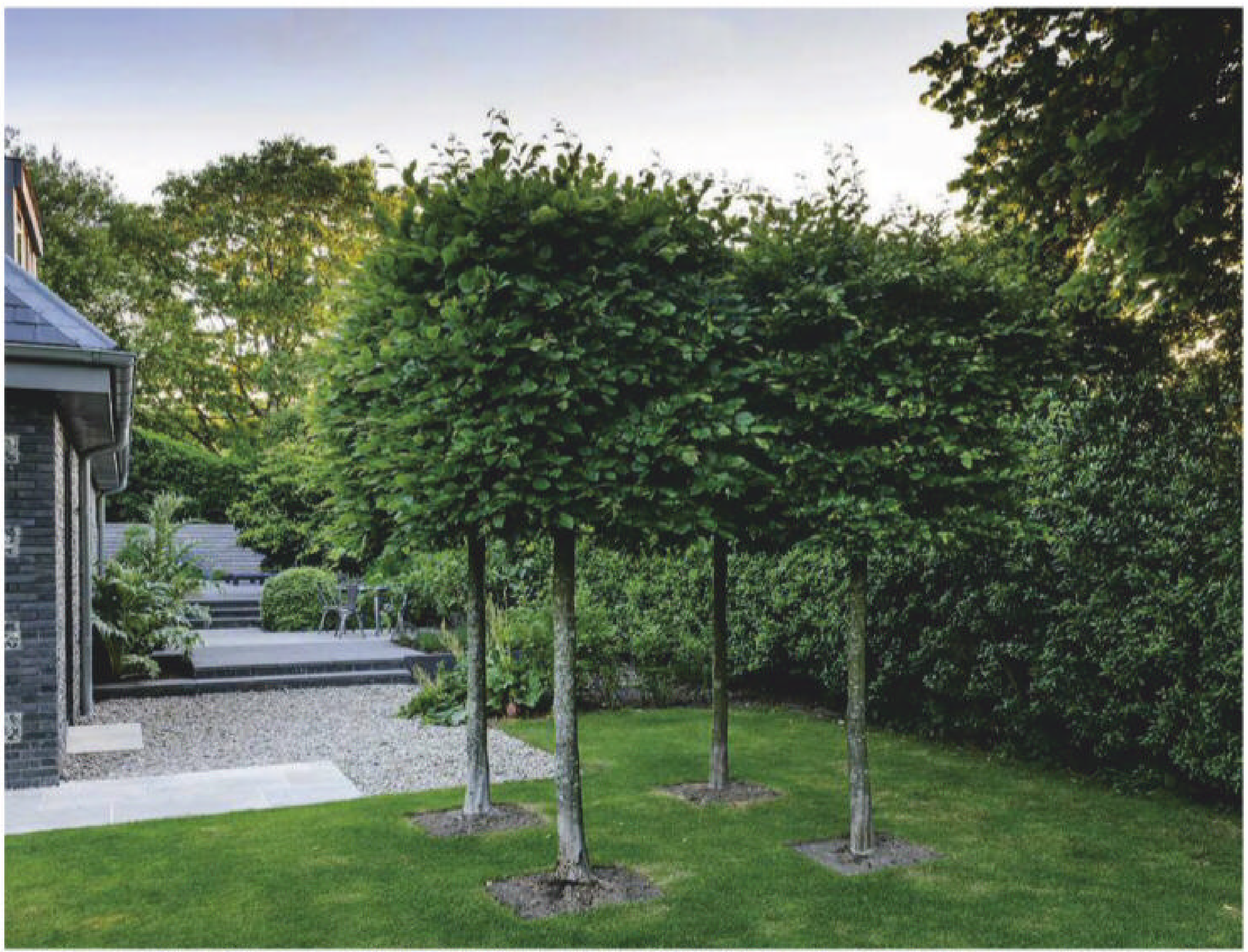
Looking across the meadow and lawn, towards the house the ha-ha breaks up the expanse of grass. Its flint-filled gabions create a pleasing fusion of old and new, much like the rest of the property.

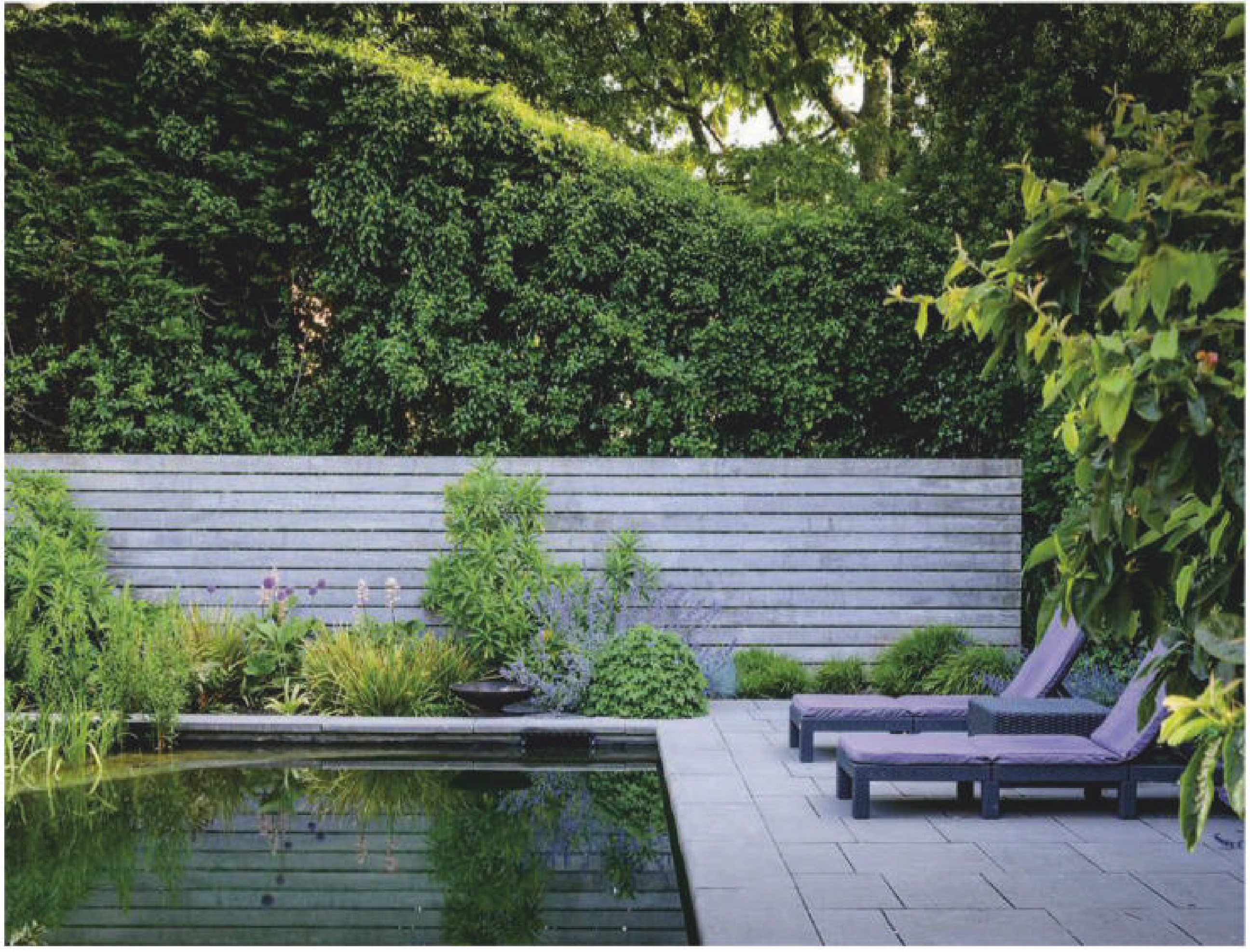
IN BRIEF

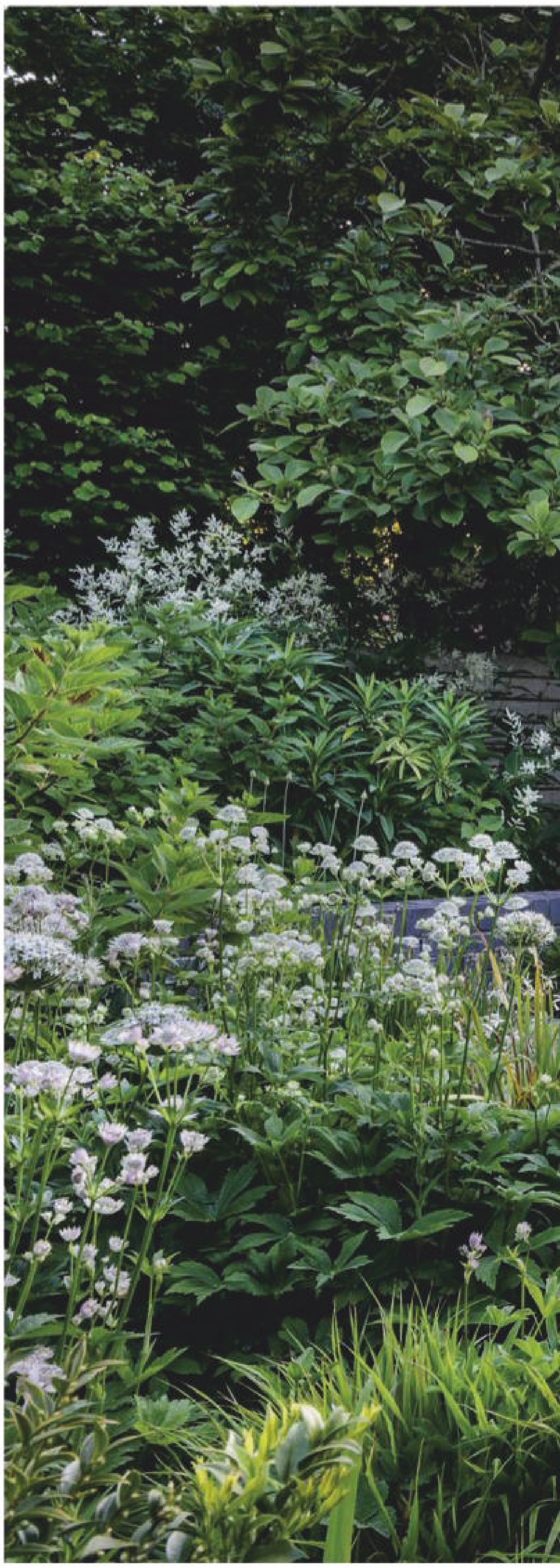
What A modern country garden, partly enclosed by trees and hedges.
Where West Sussex.
Soil Constructed topsoil on top of underlying clay flint.
Size Two acres.
Climate Temperate, with warm summers and cool winters.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

At the foot of the South Downs in West Sussex sits a confident, modern house that echoes past traditions. Although visually striking, the house quietly occupies the site of two acres and is sympathetic to its agricultural setting. As if hunkering down, the building is rooted in its location through the use of clever landscaping and considered planting. There is an overriding sense of peace to the property, as the sun filters through the surrounding tree canopy and chickens bustle among the flowerbeds and tall grass.

This was not always so. Owners Jo and James Wells bought the property in 2012 and Jo remembers how the southern paddock dominated the site, in part resembling a muddy quagmire that could rival that of a wet Glastonbury Festival. Undeterred, the couple fell in love with the view south towards the Downs, and James, who leads his own architectural practice, set about designing a new house. Of course, building a new property in a conservative part of the countryside comes with its challenges. James recalls how important it was for the house to feel as though it ▷







▷ belonged in its location, and so the couple entrusted the garden designer Chris Moss with the task of creating the garden.

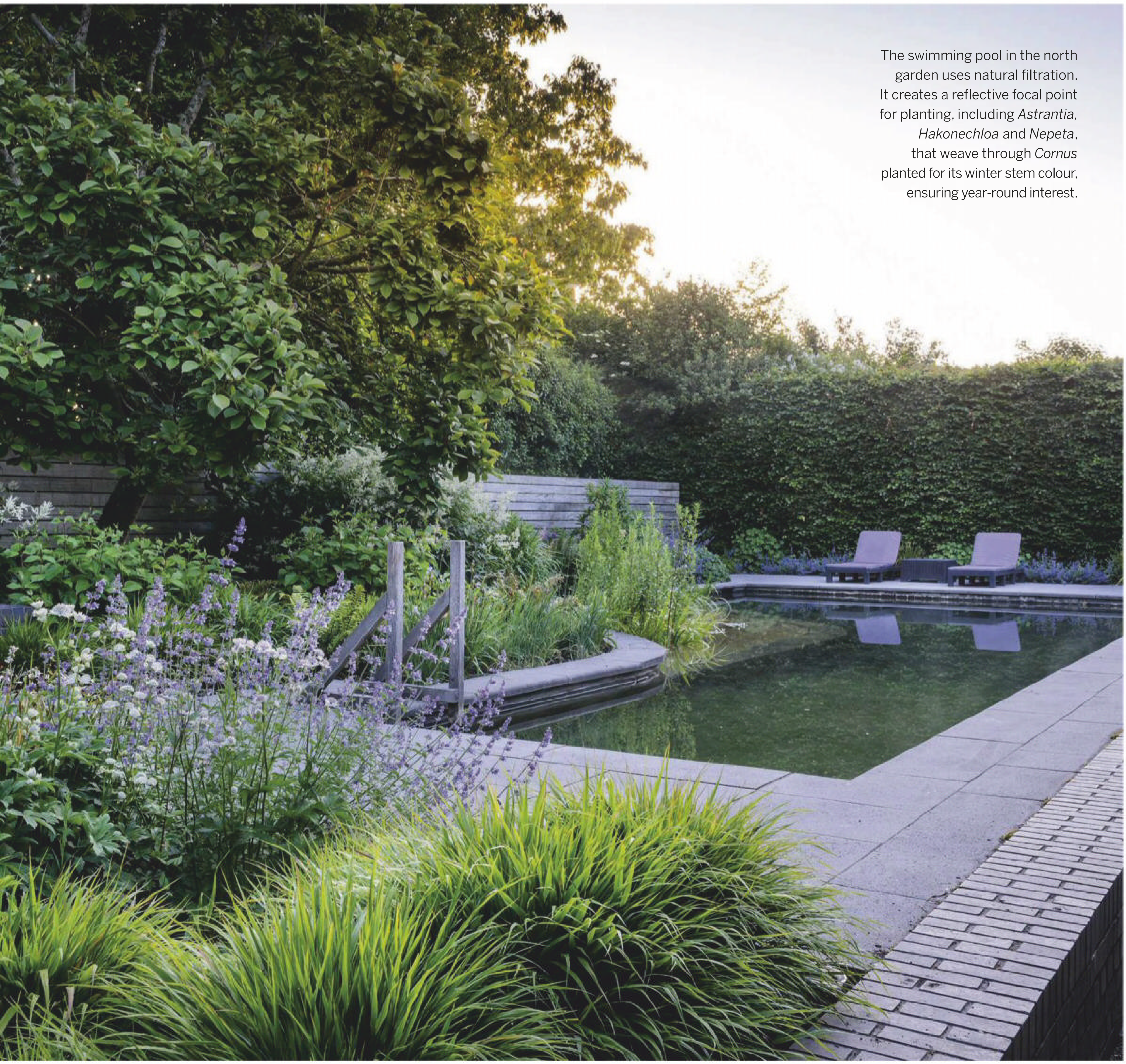
In his work as an architect, James had already worked with Chris on various projects, so the collaboration was a familiar one. A deep understanding of each other's work would ensure a cohesive design, where the garden integrates fully with the house. In this case, the house acts as the central point of a compass, with four distinct areas to the garden.

To the north is the natural pool and the unassuming main entrance to the house. The pool takes centre stage, framed by an existing magnolia and mixed seasonal planting. In the east sits a terrace and vegetable garden, offering the perfect location for morning coffee while checking over the various crops. To the west, the garden slopes steeply to the lane below, giving access to the property and providing parking that is cleverly hidden from view. In all of these areas, the boundary planting is a combination of mature, deciduous trees and large,

To continue turn to page 70 ▷

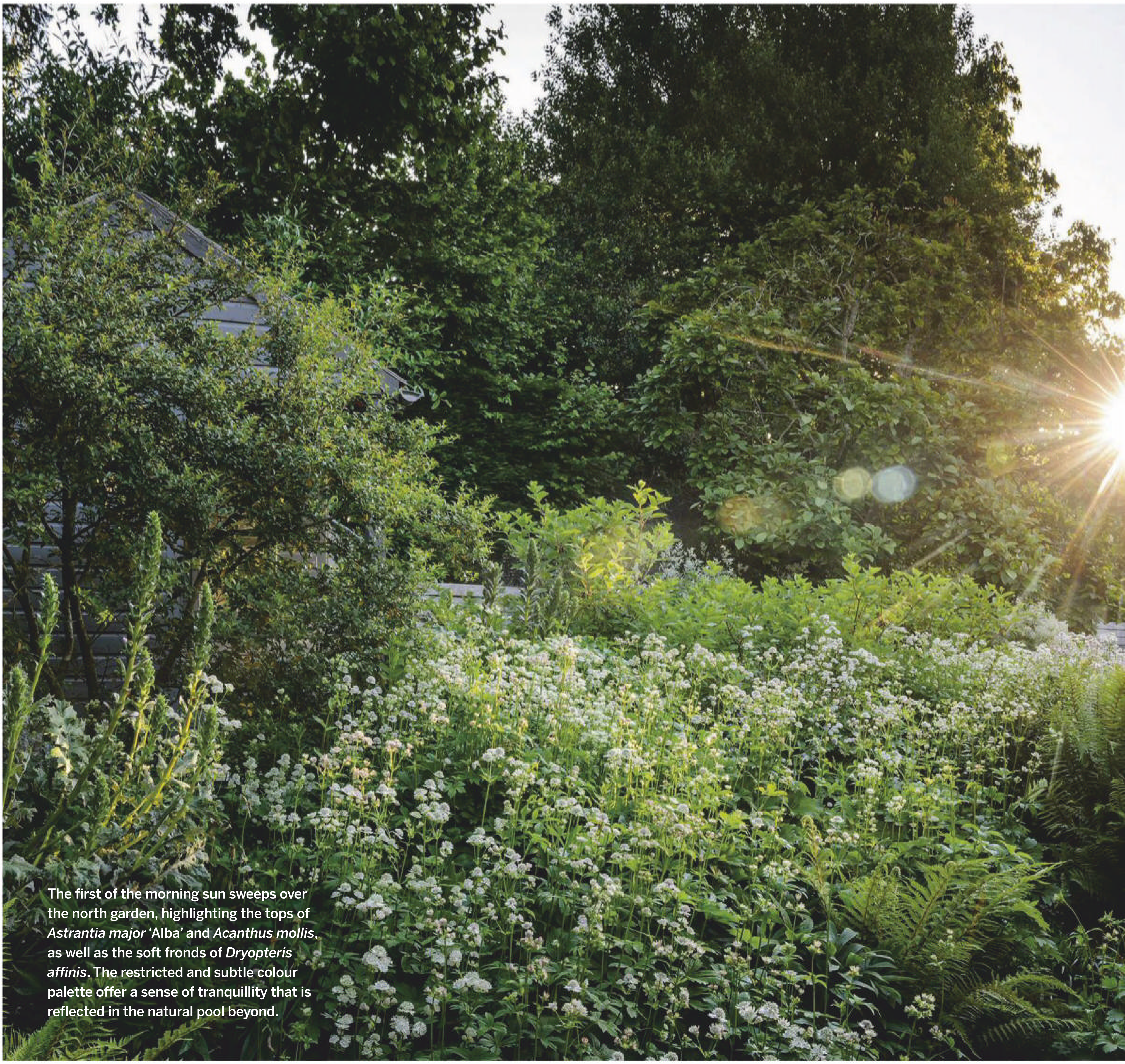
This page, top left A group of box-pleached hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus*) act as one to provide a bold structure to offset the house. Terraces and steps work harmoniously around the house to accommodate the changes in levels and provide growing spaces for plants.

Bottom left In the planting around the pool, staunch geometry meets soft and exuberant planting. Varying shades of green, in the form of *Euphorbia*, *Hakonechloa*, *Libertia* and *Rodgersia*, create a pleasing contrast with the grey of the linear screen and uniform paving.



The swimming pool in the north garden uses natural filtration. It creates a reflective focal point for planting, including *Astrantia*, *Hakonechloa* and *Nepeta*, that weave through *Cornus* planted for its winter stem colour, ensuring year-round interest.

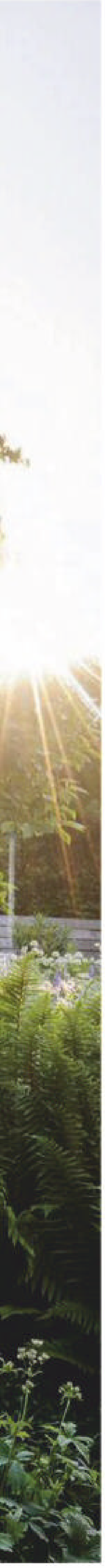
Among the abundant planting, there is a gentle sense of order and organisation from the formal layout and landscaping

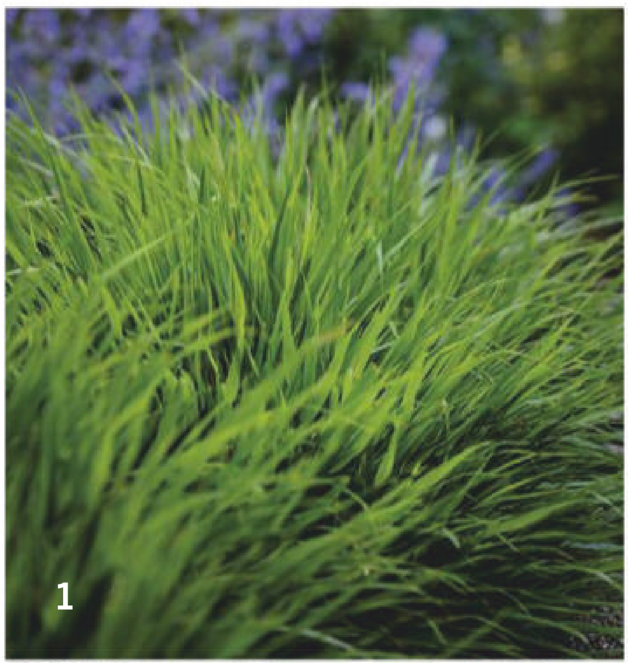


The first of the morning sun sweeps over the north garden, highlighting the tops of *Astrantia major* 'Alba' and *Acanthus mollis*, as well as the soft fronds of *Dryopteris affinis*. The restricted and subtle colour palette offer a sense of tranquillity that is reflected in the natural pool beyond.

Shade-loving plants for a woodland setting

A shady spot in the garden is an opportunity to create something special, a tranquil retreat to retire to on hot, summer days. Plants typically suited to this location will often be early to flower, but will continue the season with foliage that has a lush appearance. In this garden, Chris mixes ferns with ornamental grasses and classic woodland perennials, with the aim of creating a tapestry of contrasting texture, shape and form. He prefers to be generous with his quantities, creating rivers of single species that flow into one another. "I like to layer the planting to create an understorey. This helps to cover the soil, offering protection, while adding interest." By way of example, he indicates a *Vinca minor* that gently scrambles among some hellebores, a less vigorous species than *V. major* and better behaved in a woodland setting. Plant selection is key to success and ongoing pruning of the canopy above and around the site is essential. As the planting matures, canopies will require lifting and thinning (usually best completed in winter) to prevent light levels from becoming too low. In dry areas, the use of organic mulch will help, although additional irrigation may be required during any prolonged hot weather.

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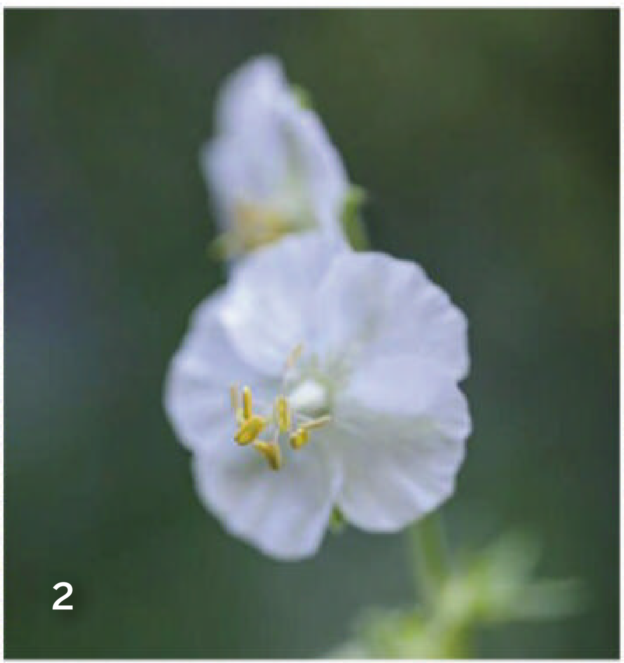
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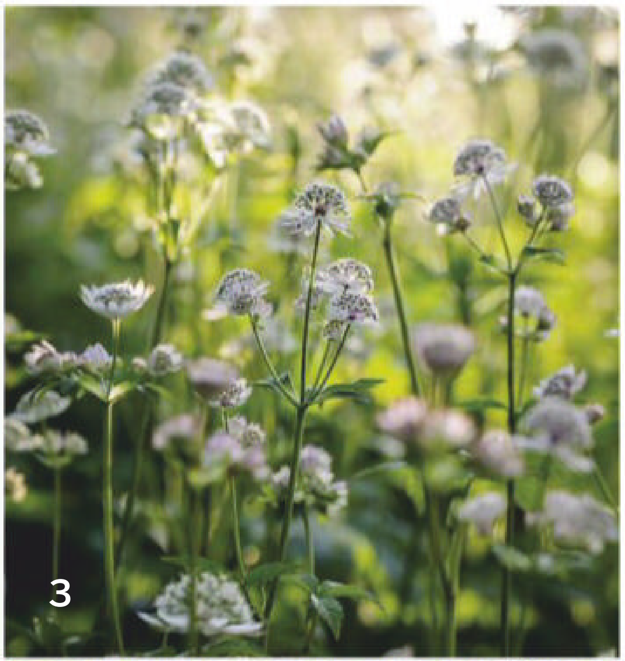
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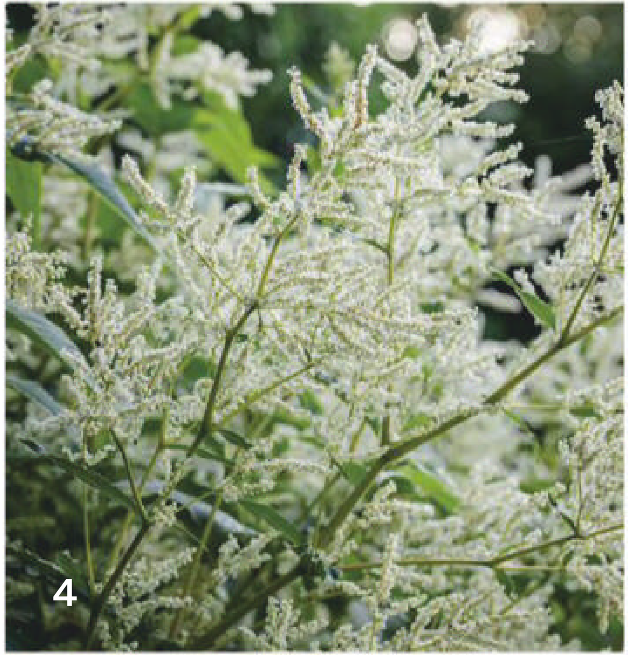
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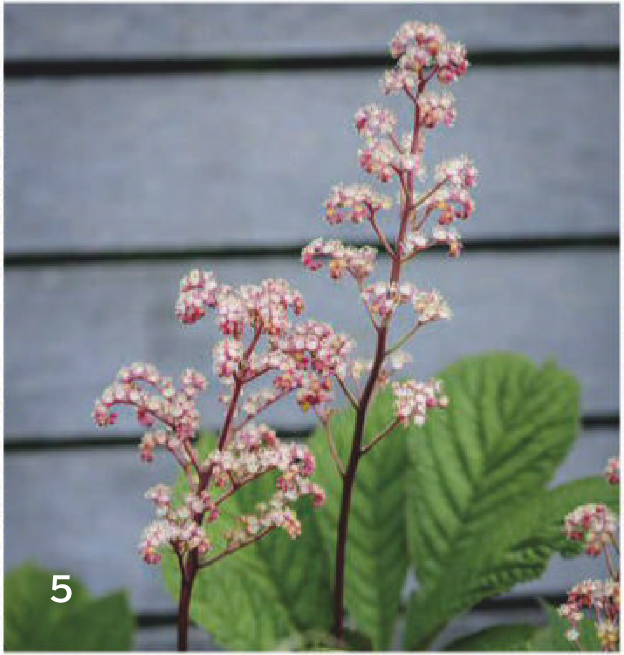
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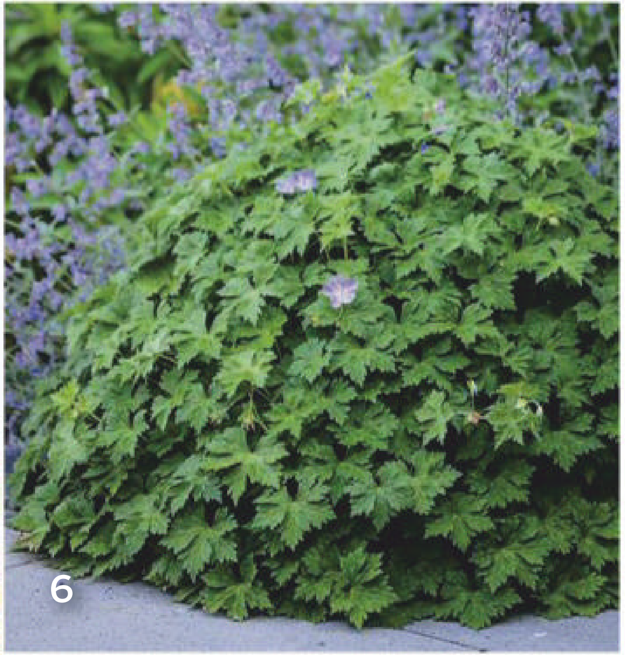
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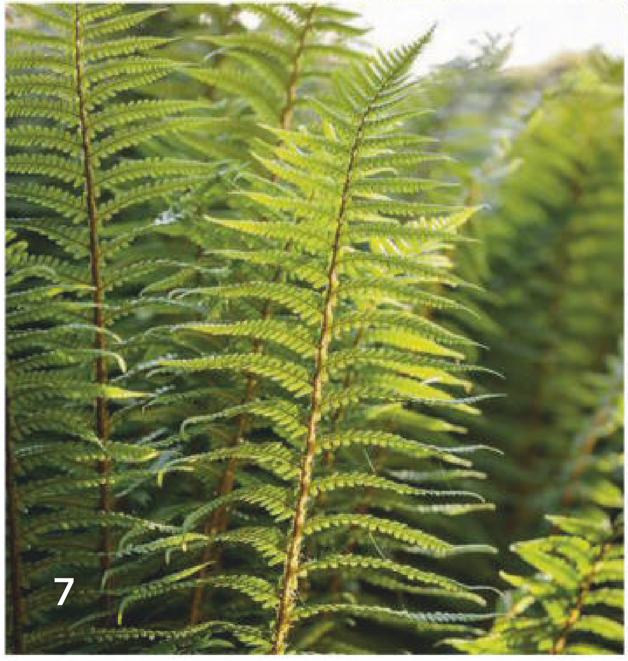
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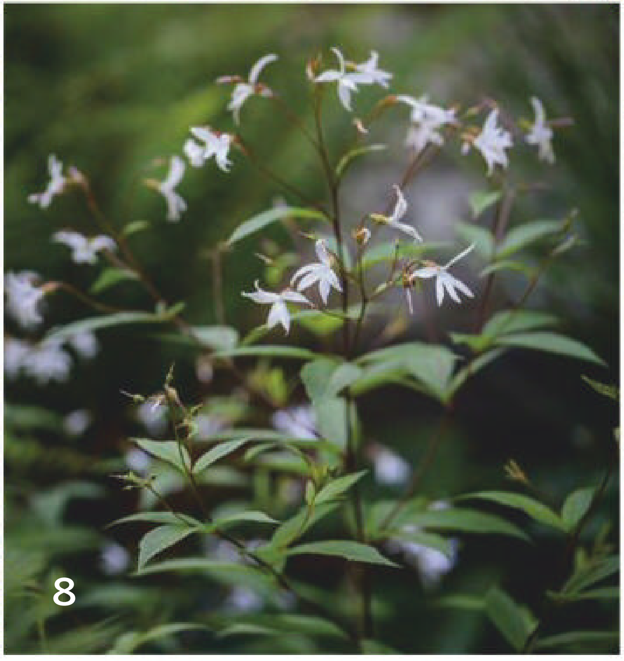
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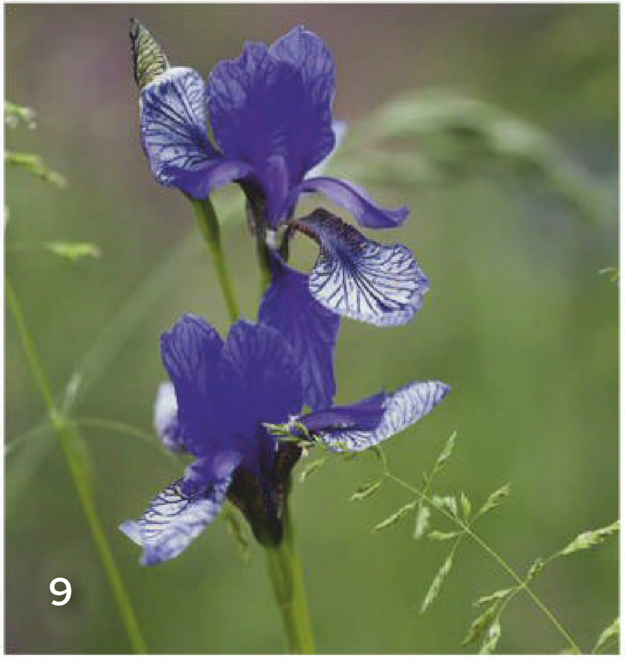
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1 ***Hakonechloa macra*** Deciduous, perennial grass with emerald-green leaves and fine flower panicles from late summer, followed by golden hues in autumn. Any soil but the driest, in light shade to full sun. 40cm. AGM[*]. RHS H7[†].

2 ***Geranium phaeum* 'Album'** Clump-forming, upright woodlander. Mid-green, palmate leaves from spring to autumn, with small, white flowers on thin stems. Any reasonable soil with some organic matter, in sun and shade. 1.2m. RHS H7.

3 ***Astrantia major* 'Alba'** Cottage-garden classic with fresh-green, bold, palmate leaves that have a toothed edge. Steely white, pincushion flowers from late spring to mid-summer. Most soils, but dislikes drying out. Light shade to full sun. 70cm. RHS H7.

4 ***Persicaria alpina*** Deciduous perennial of great stature and endurance. Large, oval leaves arch from central stems. Tiny, soft-white flowers turn rich pink as summer progresses. Heavy, rich soil in sun or part shade. 2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

5 ***Rodgersia* 'Herkules'** Strong-growing, rhizomatous perennial with large, attractive palmate leaves tinted copper when young. Panicles of tiny, pink, star-shaped flowers in summer. Moist soil in part shade to full sun. 1m. RHS H6.

6 ***Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat')** Violet-blue flowers from late spring to autumn among soft, palmate leaves that form a vigorous clump with a sprawling habit. Rich, free-draining soil in full sun to part shade. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

7 ***Dryopteris affinis*** Handsome, semi-evergreen fern. Long, mid-green fronds with contrasting golden stems are held upright to form a shuttlecock. Prefers a moist, shady site. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H5.

8 ***Gillenia trifoliata*** Demure, rhizomatous perennial with delicate, three-lobed leaves on thin, black stems. Panicles of white, star-shaped flowers, with contrasting reddish calyces, appear from late spring to summer. Rich, free-draining soil in part shade to light sun. 80cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

9 ***Iris* 'Flight of Butterflies'** Rhizomatous perennial with linear, grass-like leaves. Abundant, early summer flowers in violet with white marking. Moist, free-draining soil in full sun or light shade. 90cm. AGM. RHS H7.

[*] Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.

9 DIANNA JAZWINSKI

▷ evergreen hedges. They gently hug and enclose the property, making much of the garden feel private and secluded.

In contrast, as Chris explains, "the south is all about the view". Here the layout is simple and open; a well-maintained lawn drops down to a meadow that stretches away from the house to frame the countryside beyond.

Walking around the garden, there is a gentle sense of order and organisation, not from the planting, which is soft and abundant, but from the layout and landscaping. The dark grey of the Schellevis paving replicates that of the roof tiles, while complementing the varying tones of the traditional timber shingles and knapped flint, a historic building material of the local area. Geometric borders and well-placed shrubs gently divide the different spaces that effortlessly link with one another around the house, mirroring both the proportions and shapes of the building. It is as if the garden and house intimately speak to one another. "For me it is all about the small details," explains Chris. He describes how the top of a small wall

Above Walking from the front gate up the curved path, the house begins to reveal itself. Softly planted borders of low perennials, are punctuated by *Amelanchier* x *lamarckii* and *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' to add seasonal interest and a sense of enclosure.

This page, top right Sun-loving plantings of *Echinacea*, *Nepeta* and *Geum* give way to the architectural foliage of *Dryopteris*, as the garden slopes away from the house towards the lane.

Bottom right A tapestry of texture and form with *Geranium phaeum* 'Album', *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant' and *Dryopteris erythrosora* knitting together.

intentionally sits slightly proud of the surrounding paving, "defining it as an independent component of the garden that is replicated just metres away".

With so much care and thought in perfecting the design, it would be easy to assume that the garden might be kept static. This is thankfully not the case. James and Jo are actively involved in the upkeep of the garden, and enjoy the natural processes and rhythm of the seasons. Over the years, changes and adaptations have occurred, in response to how well the plants have established and how the garden is used. Both James and Jo acknowledge the importance of having a connection to the garden and, as Jo puts it, "getting your hands dirty". For Chris, James and Jo are the ideal clients, passionate and invested with what has been created, while willing to adapt in response to what nature dictates. □

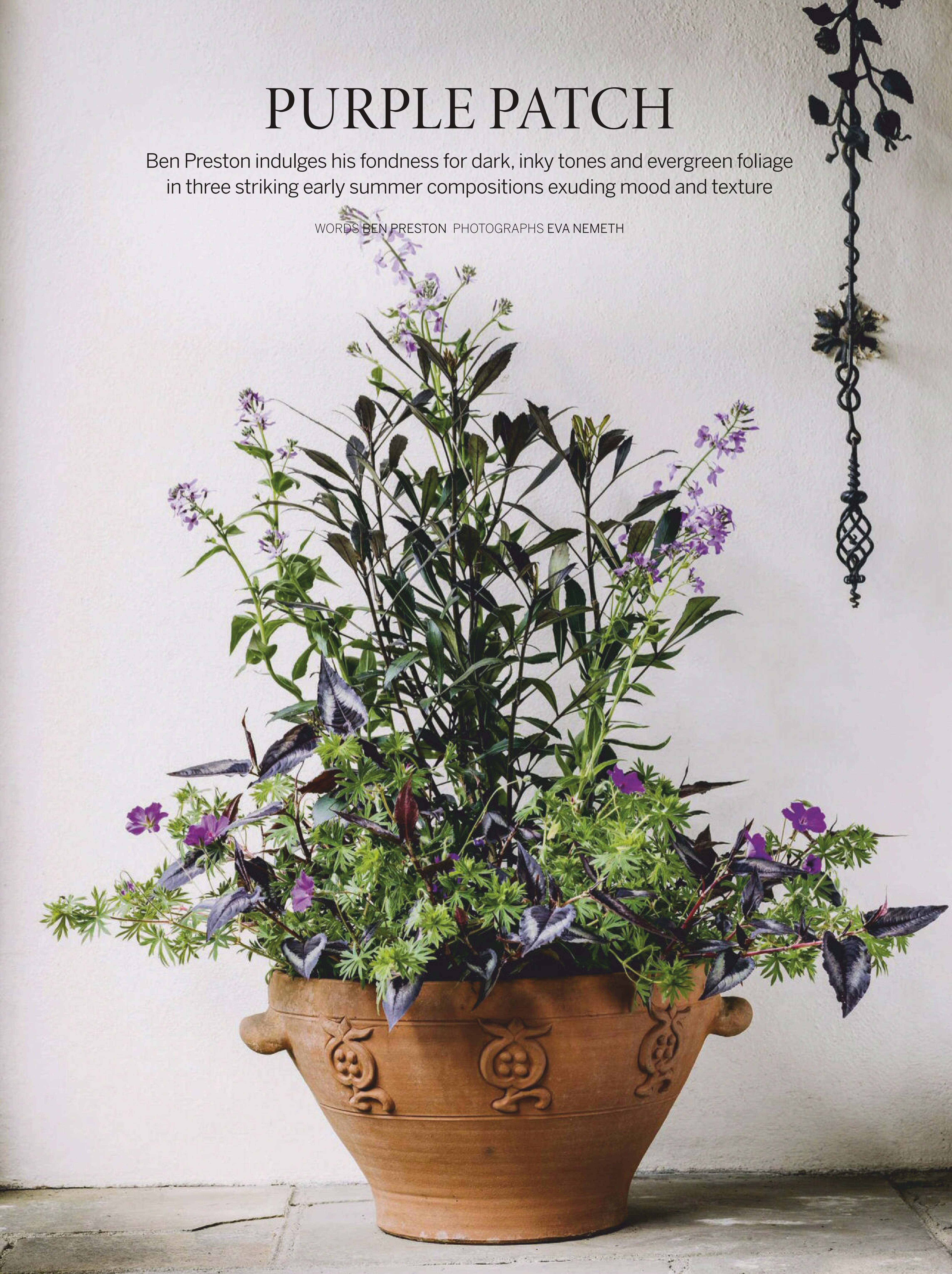
USEFUL INFORMATION

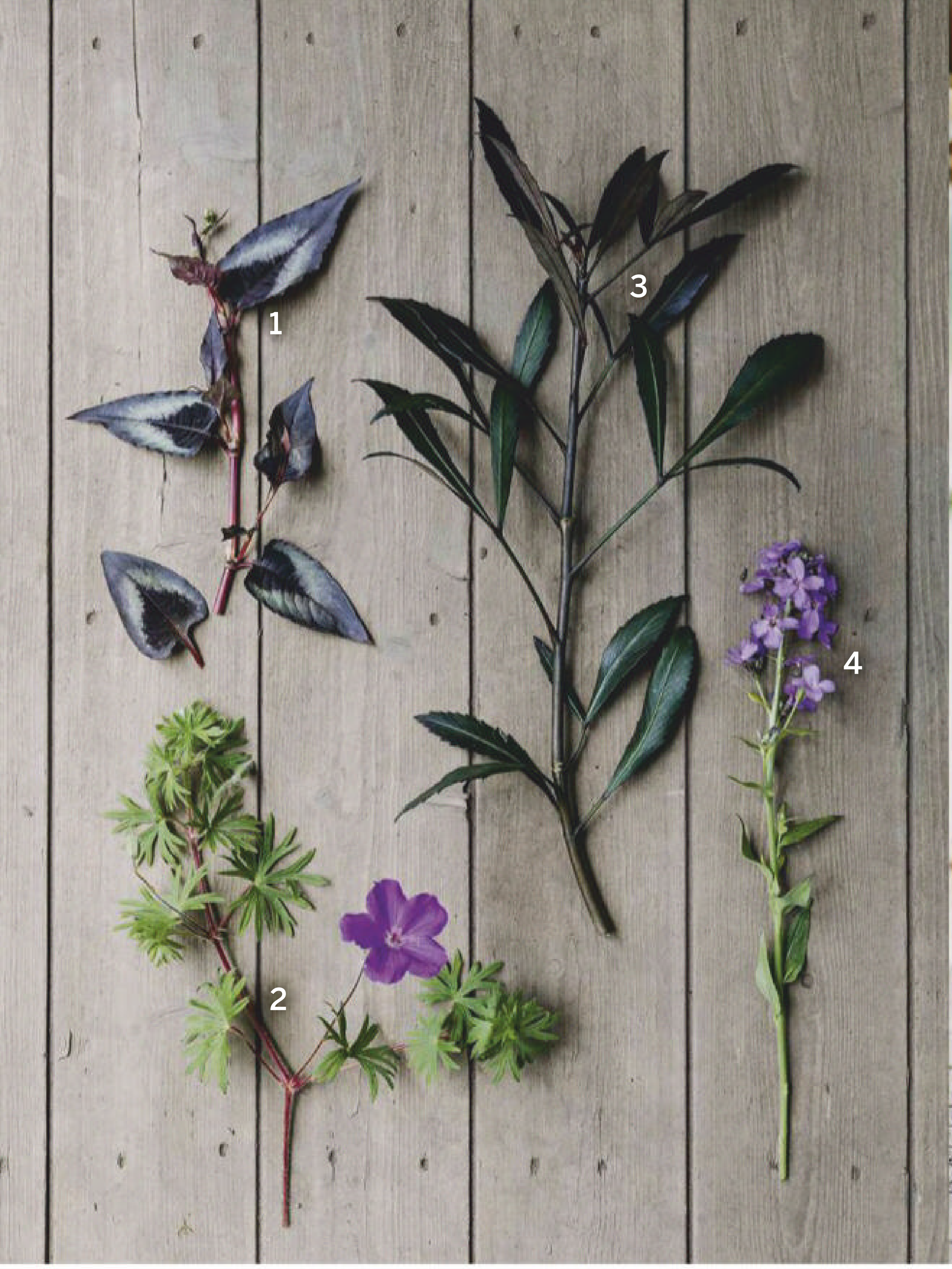
Find out more about Chris Moss's work at **chrismossgardens.com**

PURPLE PATCH

Ben Preston indulges his fondness for dark, inky tones and evergreen foliage in three striking early summer compositions exuding mood and texture

WORDS BEN PRESTON PHOTOGRAPHS EVA NEMETH





PASSION FOR PURPLE

Dark, striking foliage and loosely arching stems in this display are brought to life as the rays of early summer sun hit the soft eggshell walls of the summer house. Being partial to dark-purple foliage and bold combinations, I've chosen some of my favourite performers: *Persicaria microcephala* 'Red Dragon', with its inquisitive, creeping habit, and *Geranium* 'Tiny Monster' will intertwine with the lancewood (*Pseudopanax* 'Dark Star') and cascade over the sides as the display evolves.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
You can't go wrong with a trusty terracotta pot; it looks great with just about anything. The ornate detailing of this one has an Arts and Craft style I enjoy.

Pseudopanax 'Dark Star' has amazing, evergreen, bronze leaves that shimmer as they catch the light. It is also slow-growing, so fantastic for a pot. Placed in the centre, with long-flowering perennials at its feet, it will provide interest all year. *Geranium* 'Tiny Monster' is an exceptional plant. Flowering from early summer through to late autumn, it continues to creep through other plants and doesn't need a summer cutback. Its attractive, deeply dissected foliage and intense, magenta flowers will interlace beautifully with other plants.

Cultivation and care
Airy sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) is a useful, short-lived perennial that can be treated as a biennial. Sow seed in June, as you would with foxgloves, and it will provide you with attractive purple blooms the following May. It can be used in pot displays and threaded through borders to provide early summer colour. When using shrubs and perennials in pot displays, I use a mix of two parts peat-free, multi-purpose compost (Melcourt Syvlamix) to one part John Innes No.3. I have found a loam-based mix grows stronger plants and has better water-holding capacity than multi-purpose compost alone. We use an organic seaweed feed every fortnight, to keep the displays looking their best all summer.

Plants

1 *Persicaria microcephala* 'Red Dragon'
Red, arrow-shaped leaves with silver borders and delicate, white flowers in late summer to early autumn. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b†.

2 *Geranium* 'Tiny Monster'
Clump-forming perennial. Cerise flowers from late spring to the first frosts. 20cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

3 *Pseudopanax* 'Dark Star'
Evergreen shrub with attractive, metallic-bronze foliage.
2m. RHS H5.

4 *Hesperis matronalis*
Short-lived perennial with sprays of lilac flowers in early summer. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

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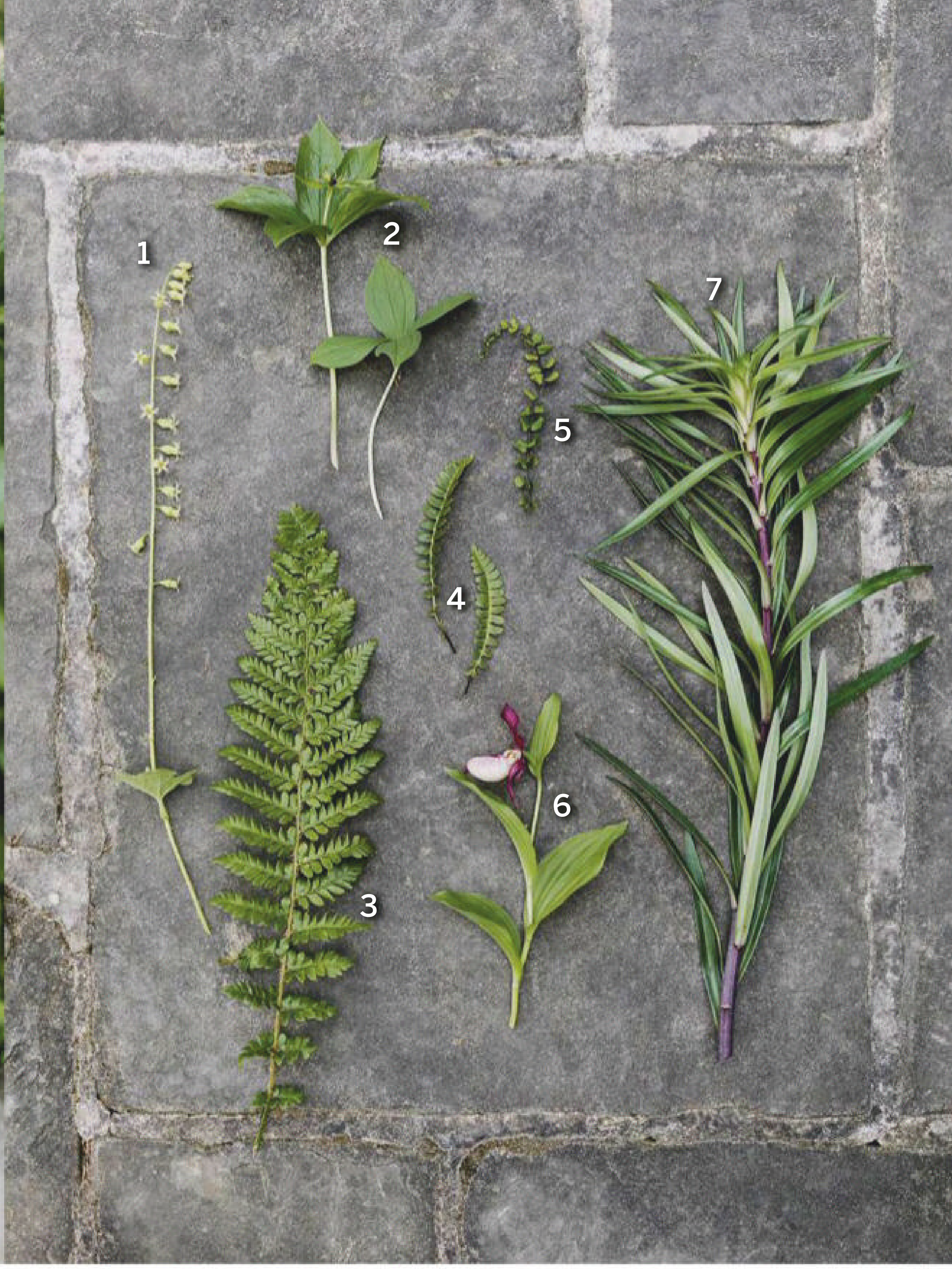
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



WOODLAND TREASURE

The felling of a vast chestnut in a churchyard close to the garden at York Gate, sparked the idea for this display. A thick slice of trunk with a large hole in the centre provides a perfect planting pocket for early summer-flowering shade-lovers. The native woodlander herb-paris (*Paris quadrifolia*) and elegant lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium* Gisela gx) are a delight nestled among ferns, fringe cups and the Turk's cap lily hybrid *Lilium* 'Night Flyer'.

How to achieve the look

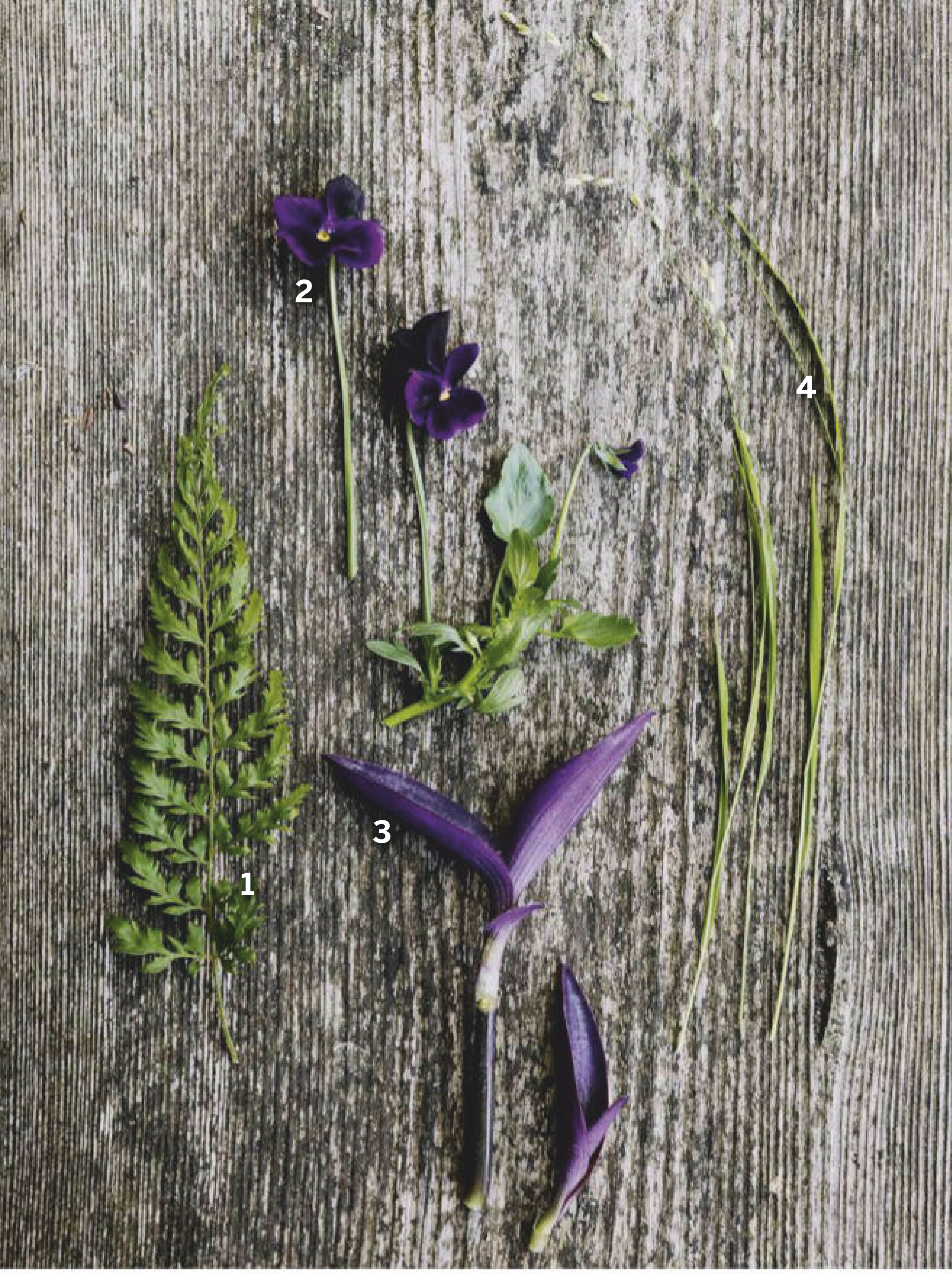
Container and composition
Using natural materials from the garden brings individuality, in this case a grand sliver of chestnut planted with a woodland floor. Herb-paris, lady's slipper orchid and *Lilium* 'Night Flyer', followed by the more commonly associated ferns and *Tellima grandiflora* (fringe cups), give texture and the archetypal woodland look. The tall, dark stems of *Lilium* 'Night Flyer' not only add a vertical layer, but also produce near-black blooms once the others have faded, extending the flowering interest. Tucking the smaller but robust fern *Asplenium trichomanes* and tough, alpine water fern *Blechnum penna-marina* into the gaps, allowing them to creep over the smooth, wooden top, completes the woodland treasure trove.

Cultivation and care
Lady's slipper orchids are a real treat to grow, and *Cypripedium* Gisela gx is an ideal hardy orchid for beginners. They require semi-shade and a growing medium containing little organic matter. We use a loam-based mix of John Innes No.3, well-decomposed leaf mould and horticultural grit in equal parts. *Paris quadrifolia* is a delicate native woodlander that is rarely grown in the garden, strangely attractive and easily propagated by dividing rhizomes when they first emerge in spring. Lift the clump and use a sharp knife to separate individual growing points. Pot on in the same soil mix or plant in a shady corner that won't be disturbed. If you get hooked, try the hard-to-cultivate but truly beautiful *Paris polyphylla*.

Plants

1 *Tellima grandiflora*
Small, white, cup-shaped flowers on thin, erect stems. 75cm. RHS H6.
2 *Paris quadrifolia*
Dainty, green flowers with a striking black centre. 30cm. RHS H7.
3 *Polystichum aculeatum*
Upright fern. 90cm. AGM*. RHS H7.
4 *Blechnum penna-marina*
Mat-forming fern with pinnate, leathery fronds. 15cm. RHS H4.
5 *Asplenium trichomanes*
Black-stemmed fronds with oblong segments. 15cm. AGM. RHS H6.
6 *Cypripedium* Gisela gx
Striking pink flowers. 30cm. RHS H5.
7 *Lilium* 'Night Flyer'
Deep-red blooms. 1m. RHS H6.

D'ARCY & EVEREST
DEPOSIT 2/-



BOX OF TRICKS

Putting containers together is far more enjoyable when you can connect with the plants. This rich combination of foliage textures and contrast evokes thought-provoking visits to my favourite gardens. The spear-shaped leaves of *Tradescantia pallida* 'Purpurea' is a near-perfect colour match to the small but striking flowers of *Viola* 'Raven' that I collected from nurseryman Jack Willgoss of the excellent Wildgoose Nursery in Shropshire.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition

Container gardening is all about being playful and using your creative flair. Here, elegant arching fronds of the soft shield fern (*Polystichum setiferum* 'Pulcherrimum Bevis') and the soft, golden tufts and floaty seedheads of *Melica uniflora* f. *albida* create a backdrop for the eye-catching deep purples of the *Tradescantia pallida* 'Purpurea' and *Viola* 'Raven'. Choosing plants that will evolve through their growth habit can add months of interest. *T. pallida* 'Purpurea' will creep and trail, creating a waterfall of rich-purple spears. The simple wooden box gives a rustic feel that can be easily placed on a window ledge, bench or garden table, I picked this one up from the Harrogate Spring Flower Show.

Cultivation and care

Perennial violas are often underrated, but are perfect for small containers and are daintier and more attractive than pansies, their bedding-scheme cousins. *Viola* 'Raven' is one of my favourites, with striking, purple blooms from late spring that continue for months. With regular deadheading they will flower more prolifically. I also give them a good cut back in late June to encourage a strong flush of flowers in midsummer. *Tradescantia pallida* 'Purpurea', although perennial, isn't hardy here in Yorkshire, so needs winter protection. If you haven't got a heated greenhouse, bring it inside. It is often grown as a houseplant and will be happy on a warm windowsill until the frost have passed the following spring.

Plants

1 *Polystichum setiferum* 'Pulcherrimum Bevis'
Fine, soft shield fern with attractive, evergreen tactile fronds that arch gracefully. 80cm. AGM. RHS H6.

2 *Viola* 'Raven'
A compact perennial, very useful in a container. Intense purple flower and good foliage. 30cm. RHS H5.

3 *Tradescantia pallida* 'Purpurea'
Rich, evergreen, purple, lance-shaped leaves. 50cm. AGM. RHS H3, USDA 10a-11.

4 *Melica uniflora* f. *albida*
Soft, golden-green, clump-forming grass, with sprays of light, rice-shaped buds that move softly in the wind. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7.

HORTICULTURAL WHO’S WHO

MARTIN CRAWFORD

The founder of the Agroforestry Research Trust on his quest to develop a sustainable growing system based on tree, shrub and perennial crops

WORDS AMBRA EDWARDS PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

I think few people know at 18 what they want to do in life,” muses Martin Crawford. He had chosen to study maths and computer science at university, and saw himself entering the fast-moving world of IT. His thirst for innovation, however, was to take a radically different direction. Always an outdoor person, he began to take an interest in horticulture and to volunteer at small, organic farms at weekends. By the time he graduated, he was fairly sure he wanted to spend his life among plants. A year working in computing confirmed his decision, and he spent the next four years moving from job to job, in Britain and France, working (many mainly unpaid) in organic market gardens. At one point he found on the Scottish island of Iona, where the winds lashing in from the Atlantic were so fierce he had to stake his young cabbages and courgettes to stop them blowing away. After that, restoring a walled garden in Devon was bliss. He loved the intimacy of the landscape, and when he was ready to set up his own market garden, he chose to do so in south Devon, selling his produce through the market at Totnes.

> OUR GROWING SYSTEMS SHOULD ALL BE STORING CARBON; PLANTS ARE THE ONLY WAY OF TAKING IT OUT OF THE AIR

It was a happy life, recalls Martin, if a hard one. “But after a couple of years I began to have doubts about how sustainable it was. So I started researching about soil (there were concerns even 25 years ago) and about carbon emissions and climate change, which was definitely fringe at that point, and began looking into agroforestry – integrating trees with crops. There was a man called Robert Hart who had been writing pamphlets about the experiments he was doing in his garden in Shropshire. He called it ‘forest gardening’. I went to have a look, and found it quite inspiring, even though he freely admitted that he didn’t know that much about what he was doing. But even so, he had created a very interesting system. And I saw at once how I could take his ideas forward.”

Hart’s experimental growing system had, for him, been something of a hobby. Martin wanted to investigate it properly, to establish, through methodical research and experimentation, a sound, scientific basis for forest gardening, by which he meant a low-input, multi-layered cropping system, modelled on young, natural woodland. So in 1992 he set up a charity, the Agroforestry Research Trust, and approached the Dartington Hall Trust for some land. By 1994, he had a two-acre field, and began to plant his first demonstration garden. Three years later, Dartington leased him a further eight and a half acres, now used as trial ground for fruit and nut crops. He acquired a further site in 2011, where he established two small-scale forest gardens as templates for domestic gardens. He is also developing a greenhouse garden, working out what we can grow if mean temperatures, as predicted, rise by 5°C.

Forest gardening is standard practice in the tropics, where gardens mimic the rainforest in assembling layers of productive planting beneath the canopy of tall trees. In the lower light levels of northern Europe, Martin explains, forest gardens more closely resemble the more open woodland edge, with a top layer of larger fruit trees, often hung with vines and climbers, a lower layer of smaller fruit and nut trees, and an understorey of bamboos and berry-bearing shrubs. Below come perennial vegetables, while mats of herbs and sprawlers cover the ground. Not all the plants are cropped – some encourage beneficial insects, others aid fertility by fixing nitrogen or ‘mining’ trace elements deep in the soil.

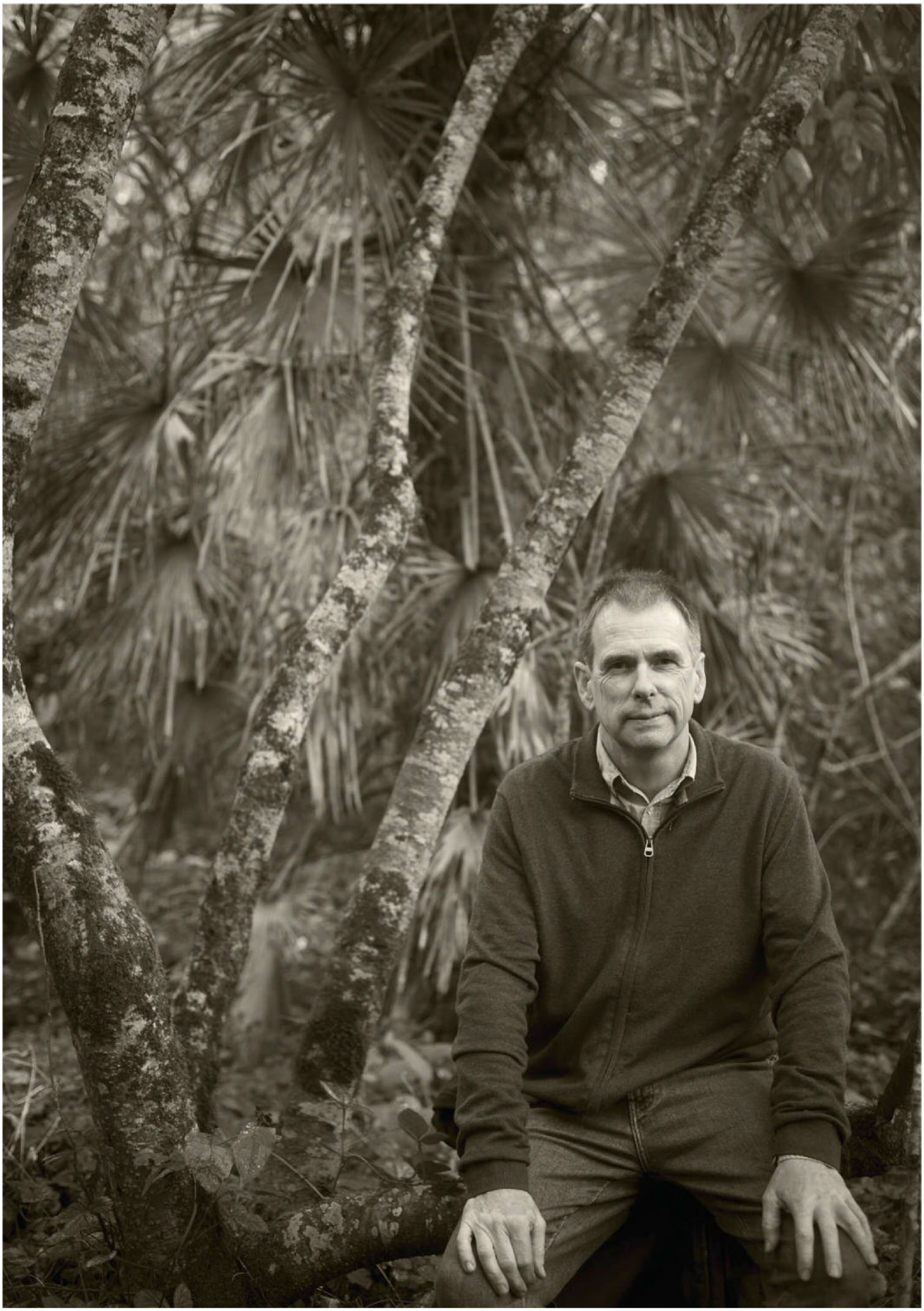
It’s not a quick option – it took ten years to establish the Dartington garden. And although plants are largely left to their own devices, no garden is entirely maintenance-free. Our best-loved vegetables are largely sun-loving annuals, but forest gardening requires shade-tolerant perennials, some already familiar to us as ornamentals, such as hostas, columbines and Solomon’s seal. Orangutans, Martin points out, eat around 400 different types of leaf and fruit; modern European humans will be hard pressed to get above 40. He has more than 500 different plants in the Dartington garden, and has tested every edible to ensure it is not just safe, but actually pleasant to eat.

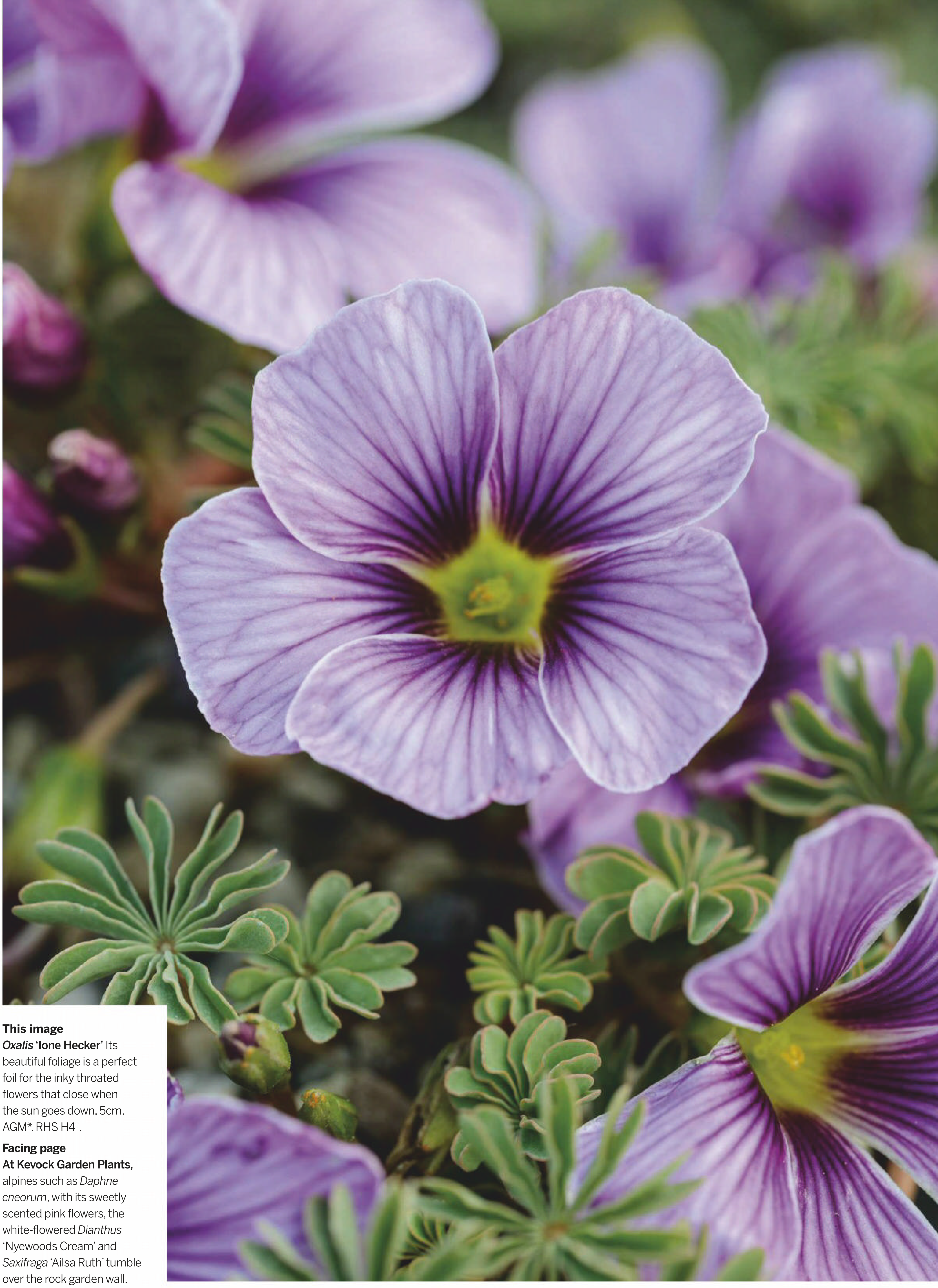
It is climate change that drives him. “All our growing systems should be storing carbon; plants and soil are currently the only way of taking carbon out of the air. No-till agriculture will help a bit, or even scattering a few trees through a grassy field. But forest gardens are the system that stores most carbon while yielding lots of crops.”

In the wartime Dig for Victory campaign, individual households used their private patch both to feed themselves and to contribute to the common good. Forest gardens, he believes, could do much the same. “I can’t solve the world’s problems. I’m not a protestor – I’d rather put my energy into practical stuff. But I do believe in the ripple effect. If I can be the stone that makes a few ripples, and those ideas spread out, that’s as much as I can do.” □

USEFUL INFORMATION

The Agroforestry Research Trust provides tours, courses and books on forest gardening, visit agroforestry.co.uk





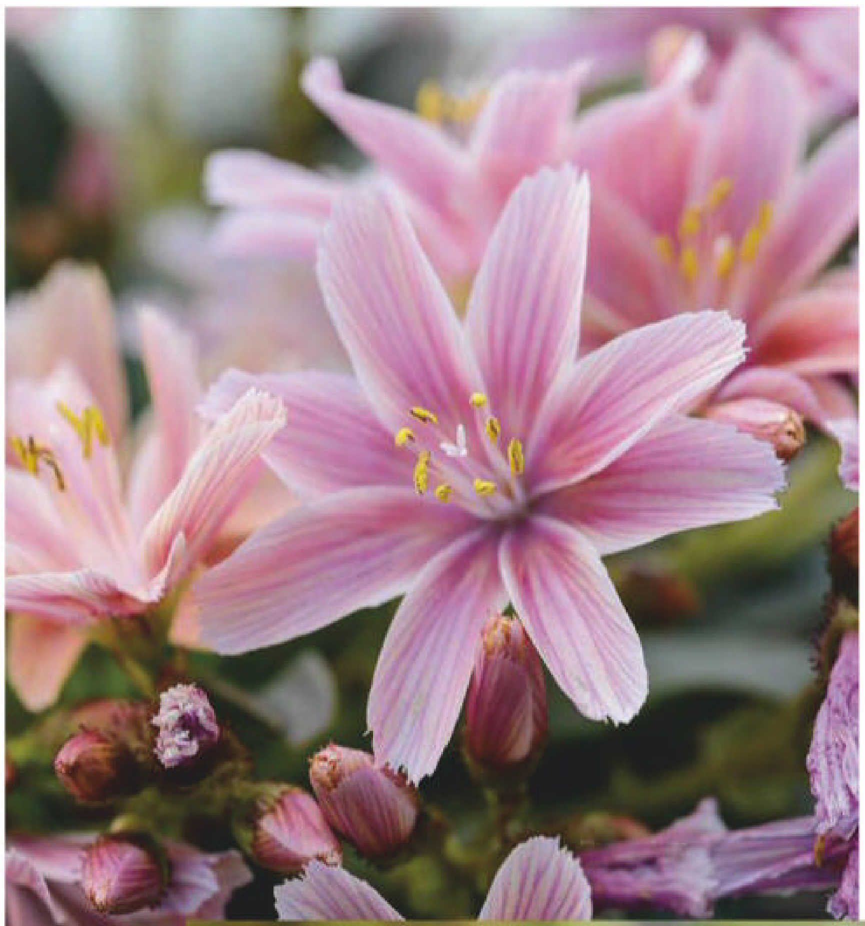
This image
***Oxalis* 'Ione Hecker'** Its beautiful foliage is a perfect foil for the inky throated flowers that close when the sun goes down. 5cm. AGM*. RHS H4†.

Facing page
At Kevock Garden Plants, alpines such as *Daphne cneorum*, with its sweetly scented pink flowers, the white-flowered *Dianthus* 'Nyewoods Cream' and *Saxifraga* 'Ailsa Ruth' tumble over the rock garden wall.

Small plants, big ideas

Kevock Garden Plants near Edinburgh is a small nursery offering a big choice of alpine plants

WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



Clockwise from top left

Saxifraga **'Kath's Delight'** Named for the exceptional alpine grower Kath Dryden, it forms a wonderful silvery mound with cascades of white flowers. Grown en masse, they create a beautiful, ethereal waterfall. 20cm. RHS H4.

***Lewisia* Brynhyfryd hybrids pink-flowered** A pink-flowered selection from a hybrid group with flowers in shades that range from coral, through violet pink and magenta, to pale lemon and white, these drought-tolerant evergreens need protection from winter wet. 20cm. RHS H4.

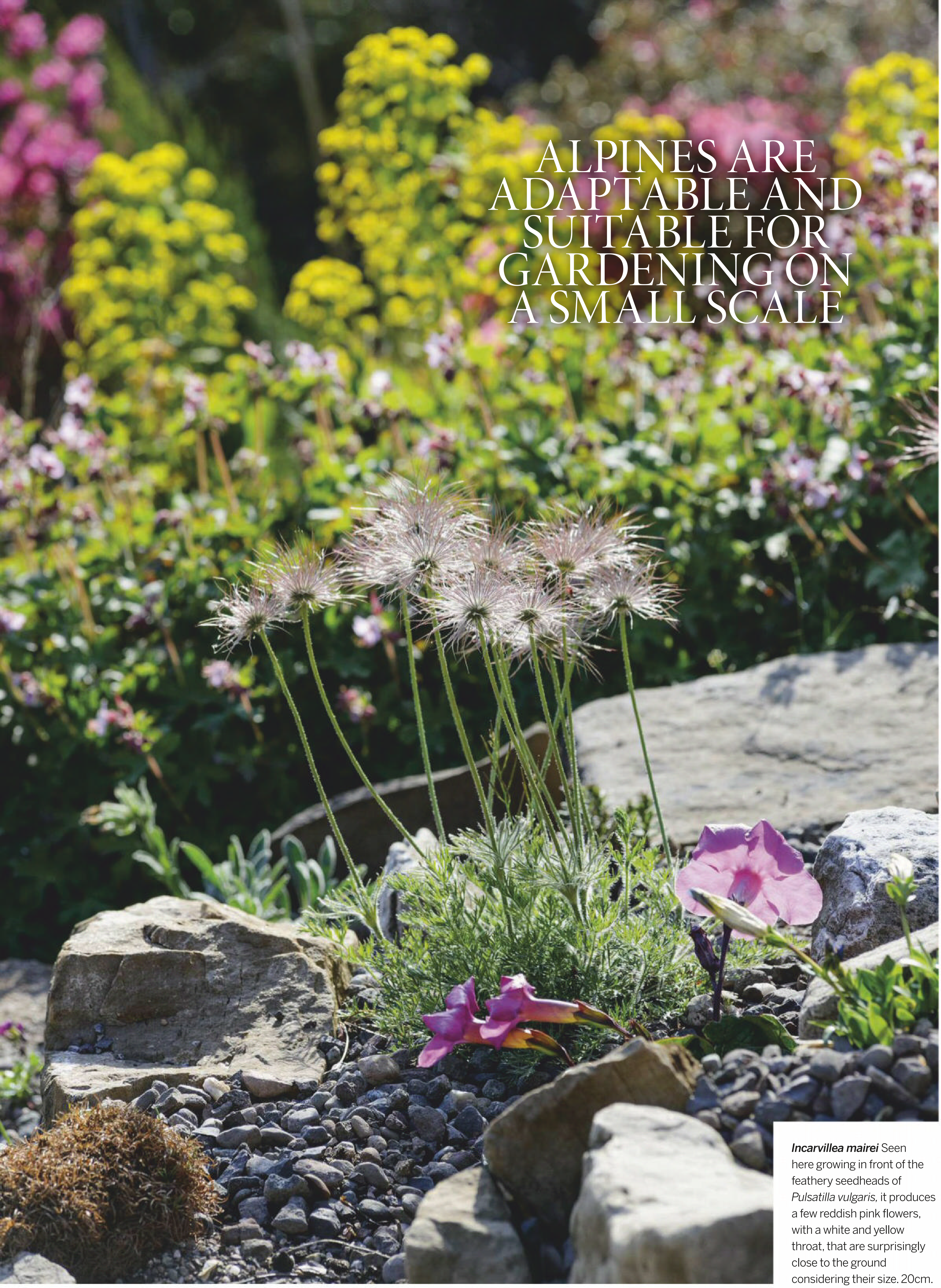
Saxifraga **'Ailsa Ruth'** A prolific flowerer, with subtly arching stems, this plant is named for David and Stella Rankin's granddaughter. 40cm. RHS H4.

Nursery owner Elea Strang, who took over Kevock Garden Plants from the Rankins in 2016.

In the 1960s, two Scottish gardeners, Stella and David Rankin, happened on a way of combining their two shared passions – for plants and high mountains – into a collection of alpine plants and replaced part of their lawn with a then fashionable rock garden. Over time as their collection grew the lawn gradually receded until eventually there was very little grass left, and Stella and David decided to exchange their small garden for an acre of Scottish hillside and woodland – which they soon also filled with their plants. Here Stella set up a small nursery called Kevock Garden Plants, based on seeds and plants from their collection, that soon gained a reputation as a good source of rare plants from around the world. Four years ago, when one of the nursery staff, Elea Strang, heard that the couple were planning to sell she jumped at the chance to make it her own. The nursery is still a great source of alpine plants but Elea has brought in changes too. The exacting horticultural standards remain and the team is looking to the future, embracing the digital age, fine-tuning propagation processes and rejuvenating the plant list.

That plant list ranges from small cushion plants to herbaceous, trees and shrubs, but with an emphasis on alpine, bog and woodland plants. A catalogue that contains more than 700 kinds of plant from more than 300 different genera includes specialities with familiar names, such as *Primula*, *Pulsatilla*, *Meconopsis*, *Daphne*, *Saxifraga* and *Trillium*, and others that are not widely known, but easy to grow. Choice plants include *Anemonopsis macrophylla*, an elegant herbaceous plant from the mountain woodlands of the Japanese island of Honshu, with slender stems and delicate white and lilac flowers in mid to late summer; *Ypsilandra thibetica* a small, rosette-forming evergreen with feathery plumes of white flowers that appear in early spring and ▷

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



ALPINES ARE ADAPTABLE AND SUITABLE FOR GARDENING ON A SMALL SCALE

Incarvillea mairei Seen here growing in front of the feathery seedheads of *Pulsatilla vulgaris,* it produces a few reddish pink flowers, with a white and yellow throat, that are surprisingly close to the ground considering their size. 20cm.

BUILDING A ROCK GARDEN

Before planning your own, take a look at some great rock gardens, such as the Tromsø Botanic Garden, Norway or the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Wherever possible use local materials so your design harmonises with the landscape and don't use rocks sourced from endangered habitats.

After clearing the site leave it for six to 12 months before planting, to eradicate perennial weeds. Create planting pockets of different compost mixes and sizes to increase the range of plants you can grow, and plant slightly proud to allow topping with a 5cm layer of grit around the plants, which will act as a mulch.

Rosette plants need winter protection from rain with a pane of glass or cloches; cushion plants are particularly susceptible and fallen leaves, which cause rotting, should be removed. Watering is rarely needed.

When restoring a rock garden, decide early what you want to keep and what you want to remove. It is easier to start with a clear area, but sometimes leaving an established tree or shrub in place can lend a sense of history and stop everything from looking too new. Remove roots, dig over the soil and add copious volumes of grit. Reposition and reset sunken stones and create planting bays, then use old planting lists if they are available, remembering that newer cultivars are often better performers.

> CREATING A GARDEN IS ALWAYS DEMANDING BUT IN THE END, IT GIVES IMMENSE PLEASURE

Facing page

***Helianthemum* x *sulphureum* 'Cupreum'** With bright-orange flowers, this alpine plant is at its happiest in a sun-baked position in a rockery, or at the front of a raised bed. 20cm. RHS H4.

This page, clockwise from top left

***Sempervivum* 'Kramer's Spinrad'** A tiny succulent with green, red-tipped leaves that are covered in spidery webs and form neat clumps of rosettes. 5cm. RHS H5.

***Dianthus* 'Nyewoods Cream'** This compact, late spring-flowering alpine bears exquisitely perfumed, creamy-white blooms that turn blush pink before they fade. Ideal for the edge of raised beds or retaining walls. 7cm.

Erinus alpinus Forms a low mat covered with pink or white flowers, well suited to growing in narrow gaps between plants or in a stone wall. 10cm. AGM. RHS H6.

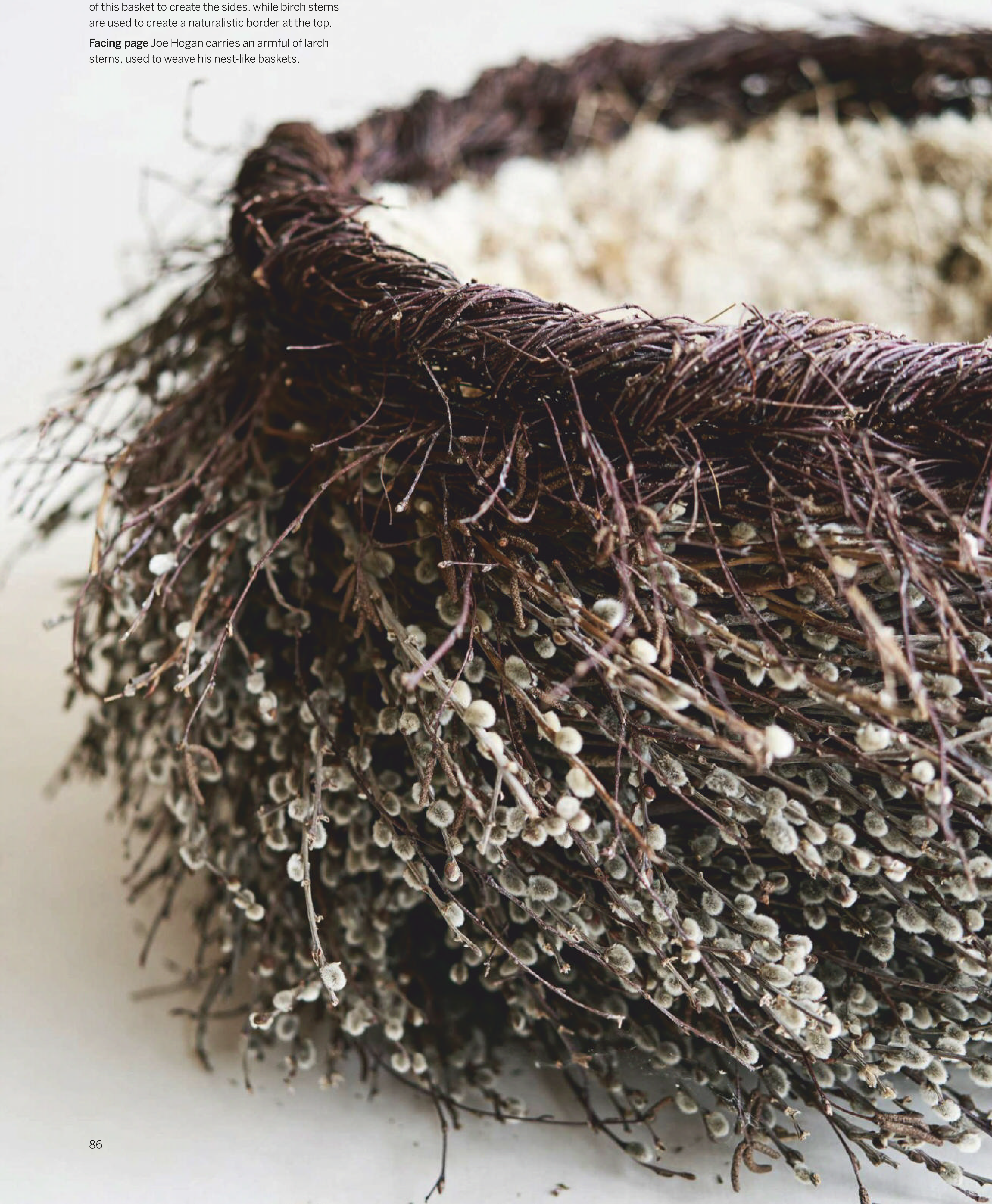
▷ *Penstemon pinifolius* whose fiery, orange-red blooms burst from mounds of needle-like leaves over several weeks in summer. "There is currently a resurgence of interest in alpines," says Elea. "The fact that they are adaptable and suitable for gardening on a small scale from pots and troughs to window boxes or crevice gardens, in sun or shade, makes them ideal for the modern garden."

There is also a renewed interest in rock gardens. Kevock Garden Plants moved into design, construction and restoration by chance when one of their many gold-medal, 'best in show' displays prompted a request to create a rock garden. Large-scale restoration and planting projects at Whinfell Quarry Garden in Sheffield, Newby Hall in Yorkshire and Hever Castle in Kent followed and the team are experts in the art of construction. "Creating or restoring a rock garden is always demanding and a long-term team effort, but in the end, it gives us all immense pleasure," says nursery manager Graham Gunn.

For Elea it is the commitment to producing great plants that is the bedrock of the nursery. "Our success is based on our passion for rock gardens and alpine plants," she says. "It is something we are very keen to share." This nursery with an illustrious past, is looking ahead and plotting a quiet revolution. ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Kevock Garden Plants and Designs, Kevock Road, Lasswade, Mid lothian EH18 1HX. **Tel** 0131 454 0660. **Web** kevockgarden.co.uk. **Open** Kevock Garden Plants is mail order only and not open to the public, although the nursery attends shows and fairs across the UK. Find details on the website. Garden open by appointment only, email stella@kevockgarden.co.uk for details.



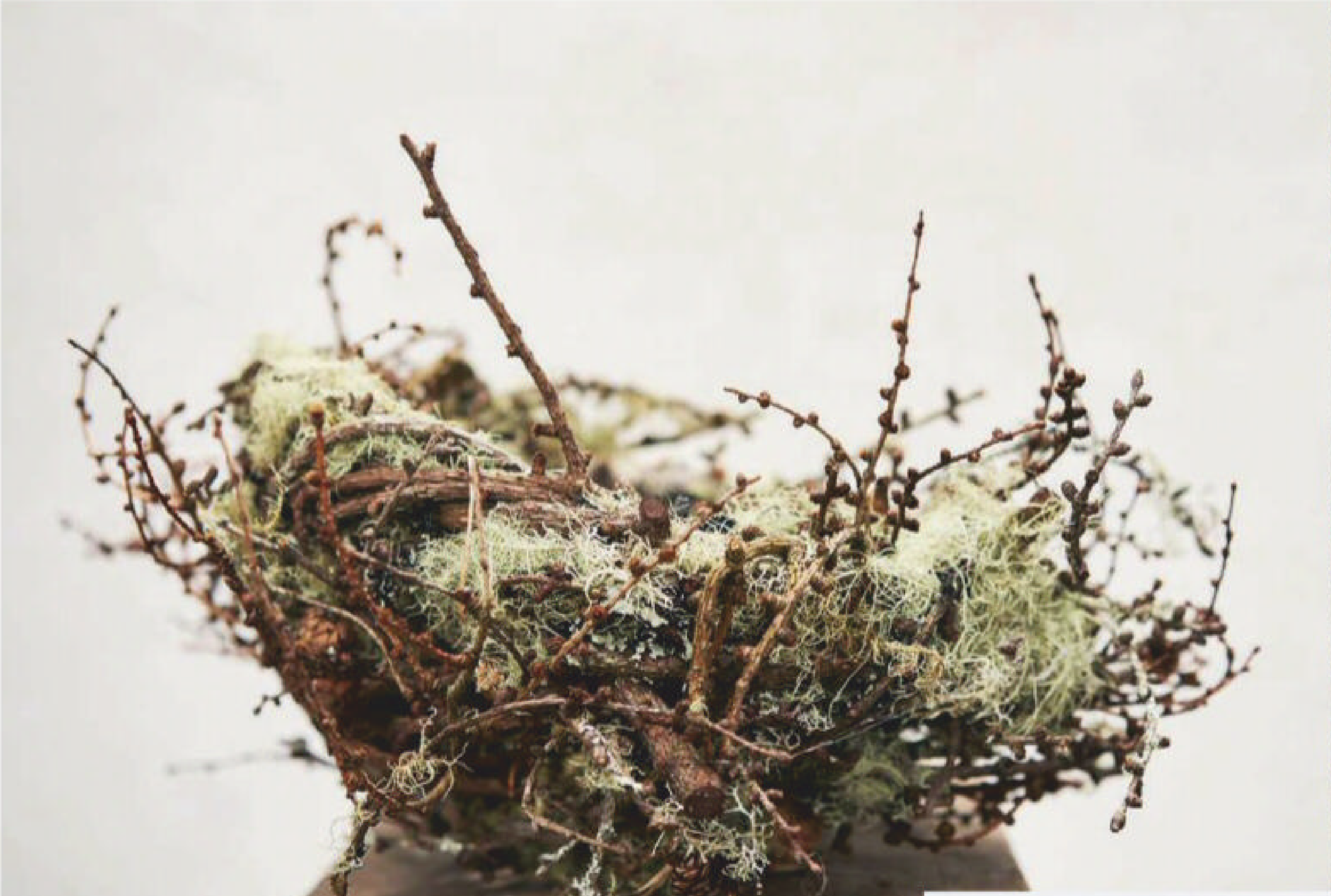
This page Catkin-bearing stems of wild willow (*Salix caprea*) are tightly woven into the upright rods of this basket to create the sides, while birch stems are used to create a naturalistic border at the top.

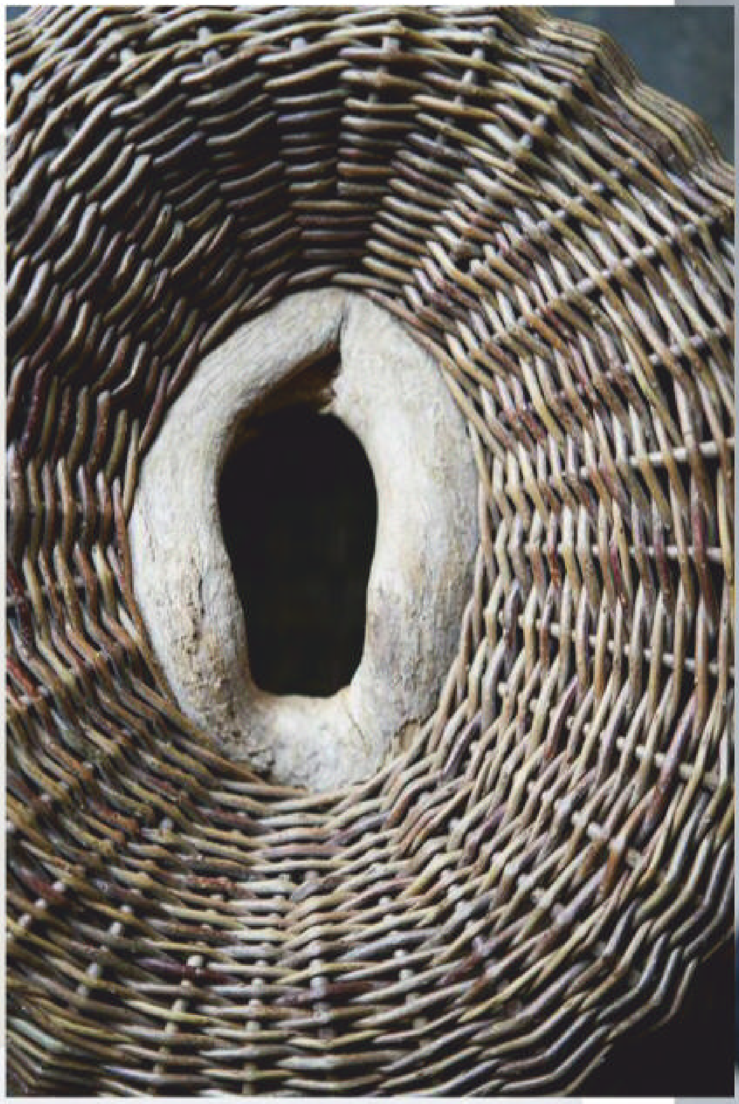
Facing page Joe Hogan carries an armful of larch stems, used to weave his nest-like baskets.

Nesting instinct

On the shores of Loch Na Fooey, basket maker Joe Hogan uses local willow, birch and larch to create woven sculptures of delicate beauty

WORDS **ANNIE GATTI** PHOTOGRAPHS **LISA LINDER**





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Joe uses larch twigs covered in lichen to make these exquisite, naturalistic nests. He uses just two tools; a bodkin for creating openings and a fid for intertwining the stems.

The centrepiece of this sculptural pod is a ring-shaped branch of weathered holly that was stripped of bark by the weather and is exactly as Joe found it.

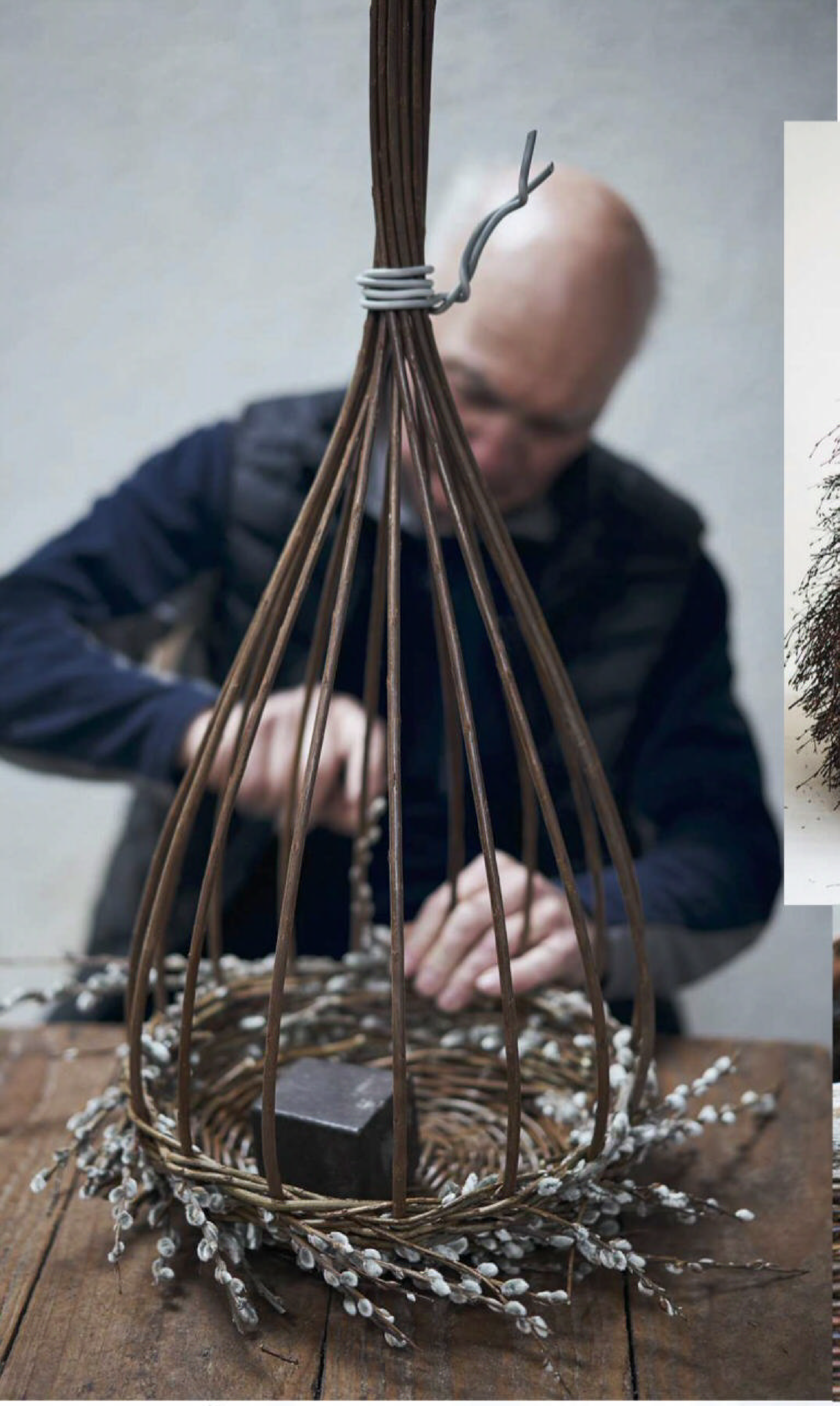
Joe forages for most of his wild material amid the weathered mountain landscape surrounding his home in north Connemara..

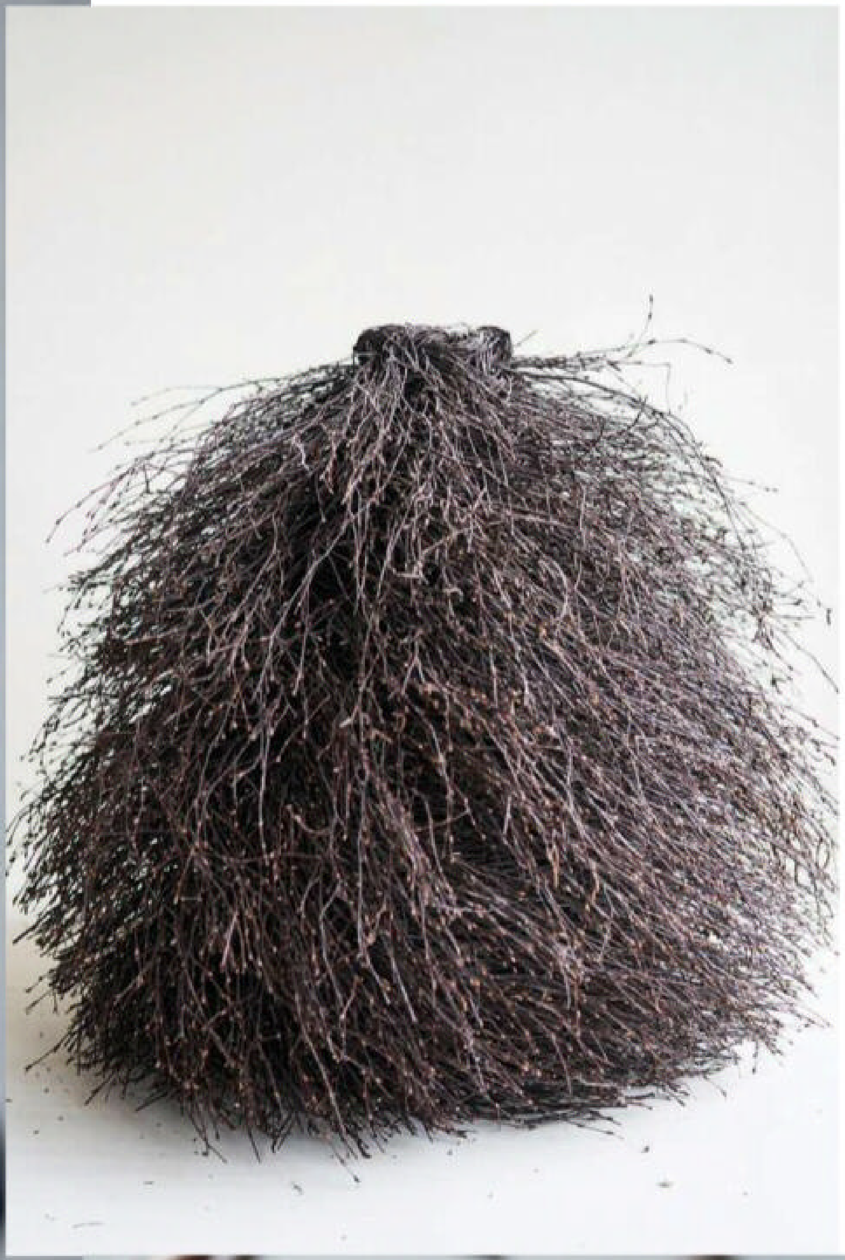
Joe Hogan, master basket maker, is sitting on a low wooden seat in his stone workshop overlooking Loch Na Fooey in north Connemara, County Galway, surrounded by piles of wild material – stems of freshly cut willow catkins, twigs of lichen-encrusted larch, sprays of last season's larch studded with cones. Cradled between his outstretched legs is a half-made nest that he is forming by pushing, bending and pulling stems in a seemingly random way, while he explains his journey from philosophy student to maker of unique woven pieces, showcased by galleries and bought by art lovers across Europe.

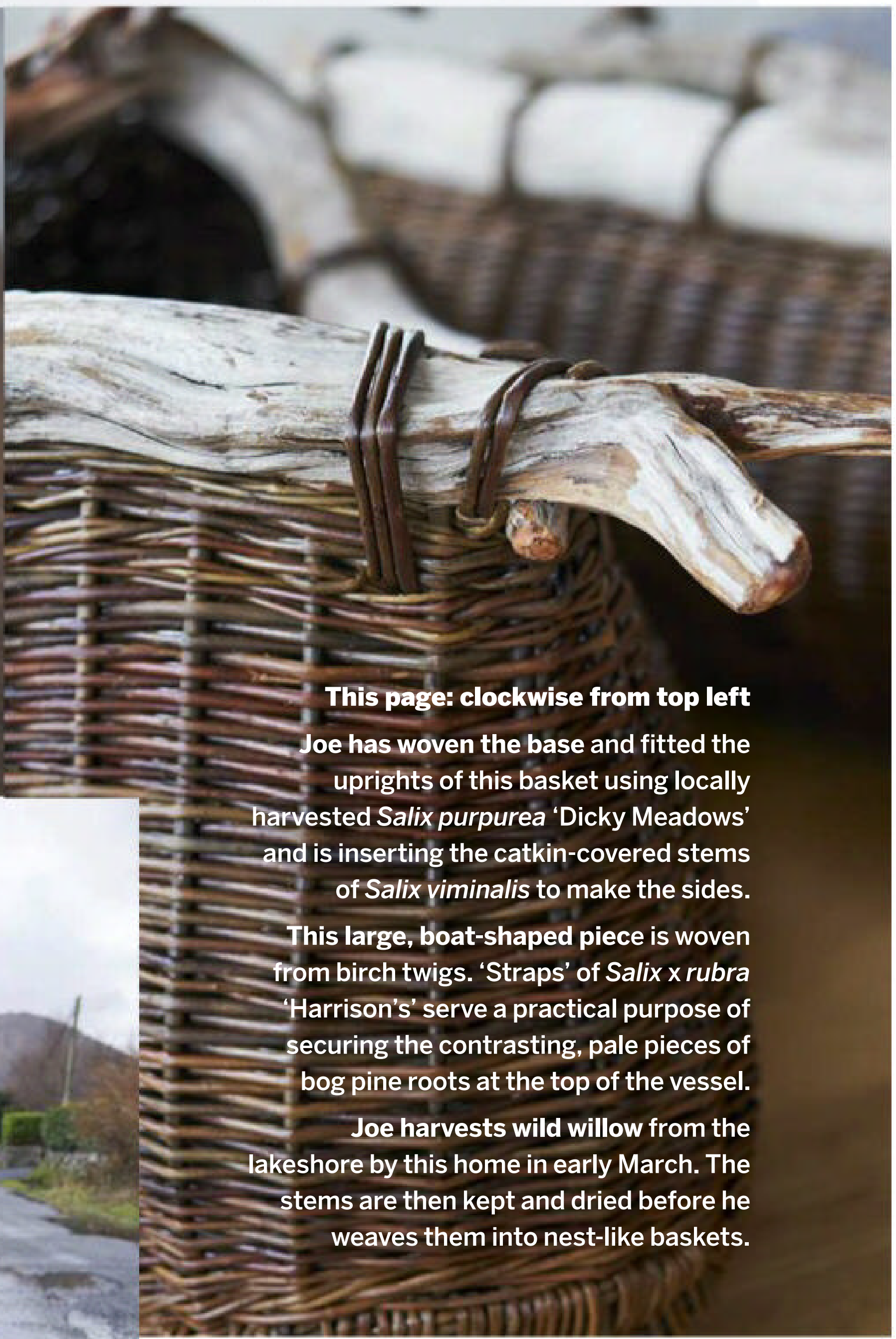
It was the rugged, wind-shaped mountain landscape of this part of Connemara, where each farm had a 'sally garden', a patch of sallies (the local name for *Salix viminalis*) used for cutting, that led Joe to basket making. "I knew I wanted to live in this amazing countryside, and thought basket making might be a way to make a living, especially if I could grow my own material." He and his wife Dolores bought a house along the lakeshore and Joe went to Cork to learn the craft. He ended up teaching himself but was supported and encouraged by two brothers who made traditional baskets in white willow (stripped of bark) and in brown (in its natural state). Joe started off making Moses baskets, which kept him in business for the first few years. But then he was drawn to two traditional baskets that were still being made locally in Connemara: the creel, used as a donkey pannier for bringing turf down the mountain, and the skib, a cross between a colander and a dish for cooked potatoes, which was hung up to dry on the wall when not in use. Traditionally, both of these were made from a single type, but Joe began to introduce different coloured rods into the weave of his skibs. Customers mainly bought them as decorative pieces, while the creels were used to store things such as logs.

About 20 years ago Joe started to experiment with what he calls 'artistic' baskets. "I wanted to apply the traditional techniques to other projects, and also had the feeling that I wanted to reconnect with nature." He had been gathering pieces of weathered wood – bleached gorse, driftwood, bog pine, holly – on his walks and began to explore how he could incorporate them into his work. The technique he had learned for making creels,

▷







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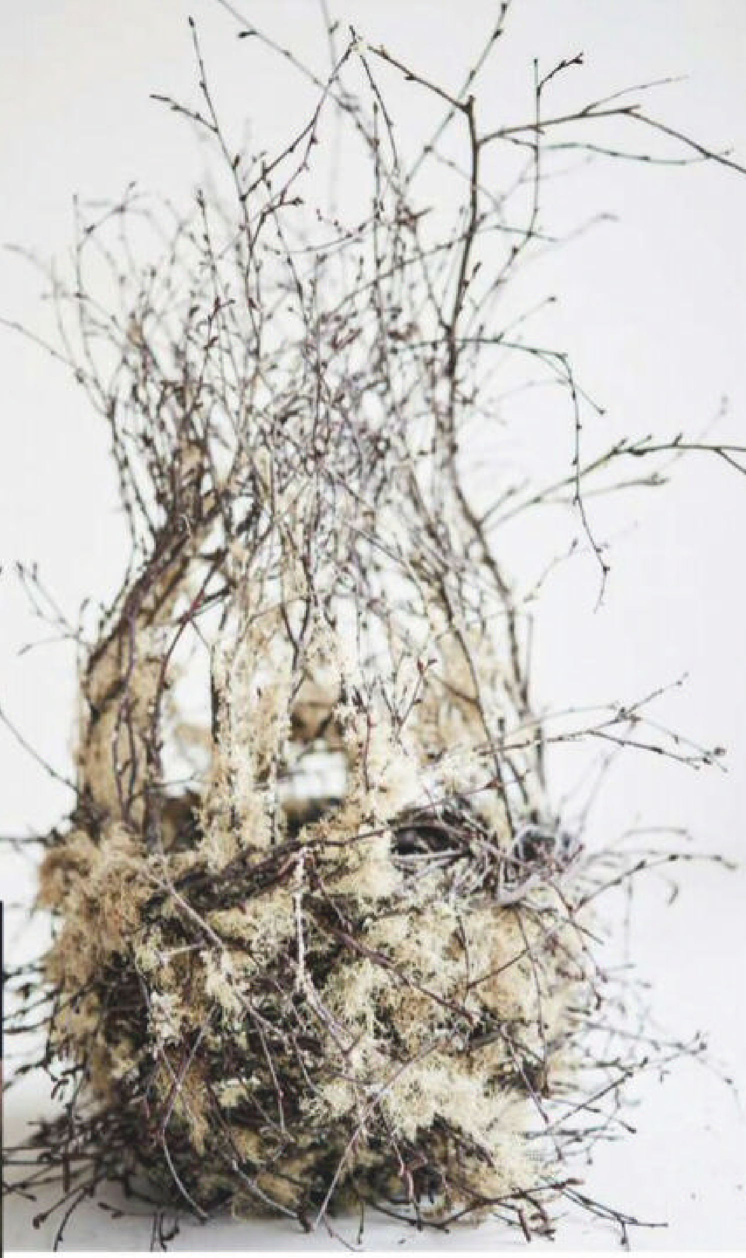
Joe has woven the base and fitted the uprights of this basket using locally harvested *Salix purpurea* 'Dicky Meadows' and is inserting the catkin-covered stems of *Salix viminalis* to make the sides.

This large, boat-shaped piece is woven from birch twigs. 'Straps' of *Salix* x *rubra* 'Harrison's' serve a practical purpose of securing the contrasting, pale pieces of bog pine roots at the top of the vessel.

Joe harvests wild willow from the lakeshore by this home in early March. The stems are then kept and dried before he weaves them into nest-like baskets.



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Joe sits close to the ground, to enable him to work with tall rods. Finished skibs hang on the studio walls.

Fine birch twigs encrusted with lichen were used to create this free-form piece.

This open nest from contorted hazel (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta') was made without tools. Joe describes the process as interlacing rather than weaving.

> **The nest making is informed by basketry techniques but I'm trying to make something artless. I hope it isn't obvious they are made by a person**

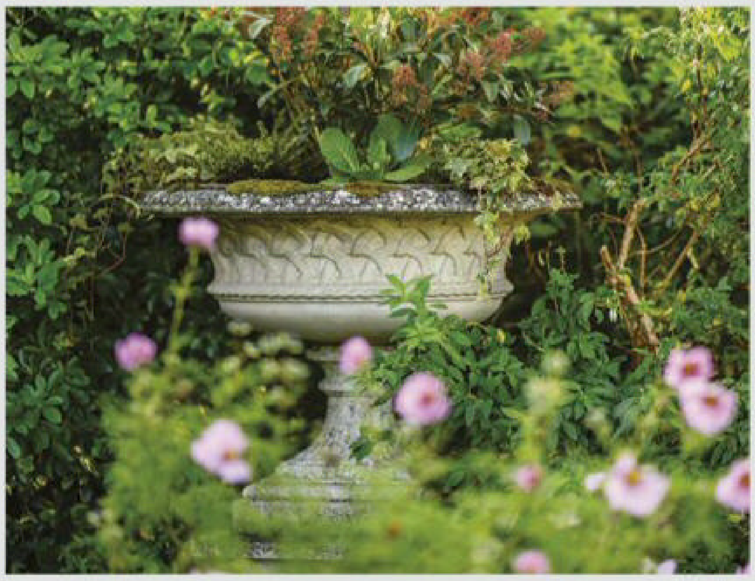
▷ which inverted the usual process by fixing the structural upright willow rods in the ground and then weaving around them from the ground upwards, gave him the idea for a series of organically shaped larger pieces.

A Crafts Council bursary allowed him the time to make a number of these strikingly original vessel- or boat-like pieces, each one informed by the shape of the found wood, which he lays on the ground as the starting point. To his surprise they suddenly became commercially successful, as did his next development, pod-like sculptures woven around 'openings of wood', pieces of weathered roots or branches that either form a natural aperture or that Joe creates by attaching two pieces together Joe started to experiment with interestingly shaped or marked stones as the focal point of these pods. Some of the largest of these unique pieces, more than a metre in diameter, were commissioned by the Spanish fashion house Loewe to form the stunning centrepiece of its Spring/Summer 2019 fashion show.

Weaving with other, less flexible materials – birch, hazel, larch, heather, bog myrtle – to create nest-inspired pieces is Joe's most recent challenge. "I've always loved birds' nests," he says. "You are struck by the ingenuity, and then you become aware of the decline of bird numbers." The first ones he tried were, he says, "a bit basket like". But increasingly he is drawn to looser, less structured forms. "The nest making is informed by basketry techniques but now I'm trying to make something almost artless. I hope it isn't obvious they are made by a person." It is a skill that requires both the strength to bend less flexible branchy material, such as larch, and the lightness of touch to insert and fix lichen-covered stems without dislodging the delicate encrustations. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Joe's work at **joehoganbaskets.com**



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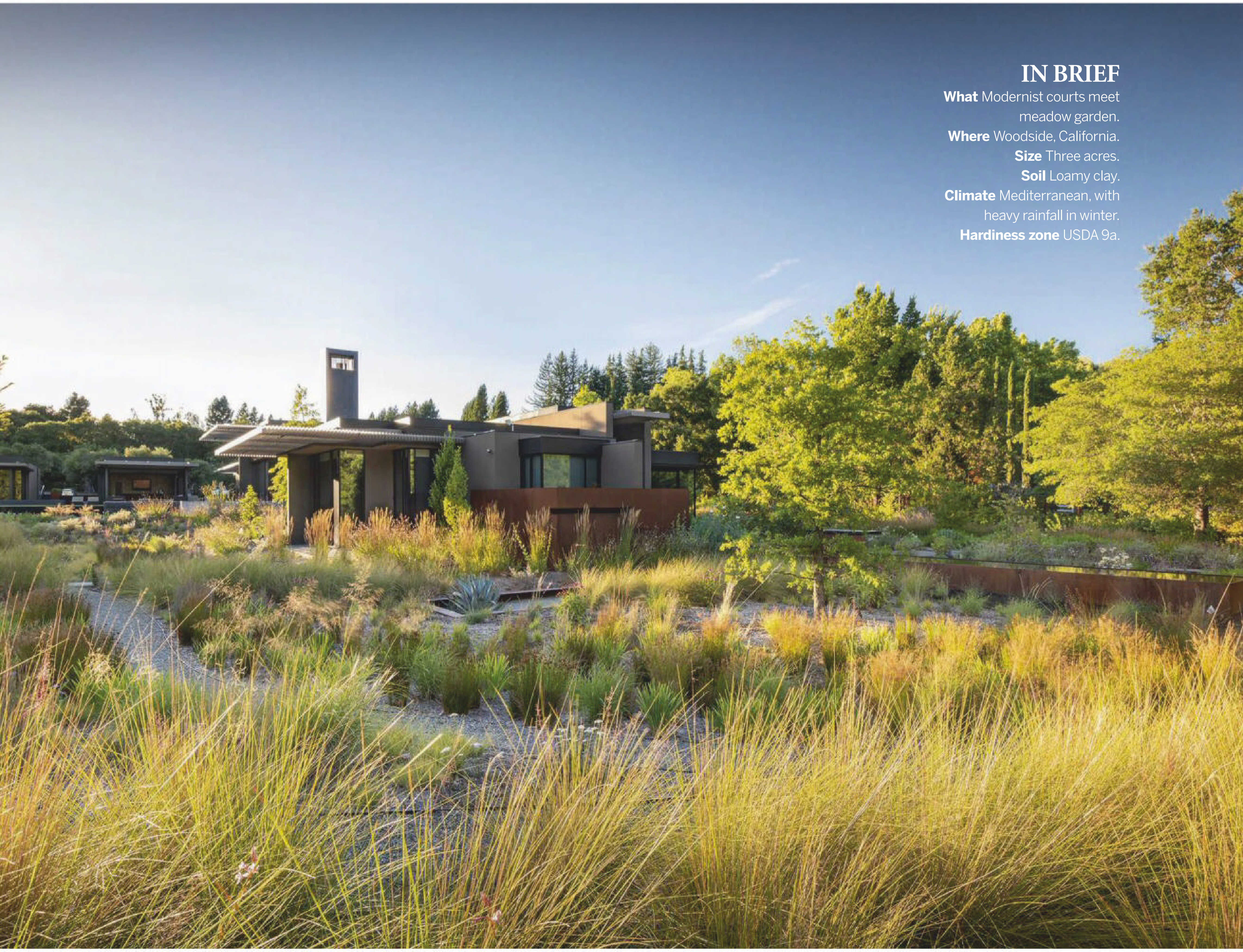
HADDONSTONE

The San Francisco Bay Area in northern California is a hotbed of experimentation. At this modernist house, Surfacedesign is meshing formality – in the form of courts by the house – with an exuberant meadow designed for year-round interest and structure

Levels of ingenuity

WORDS TIM RICHARDSON PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM

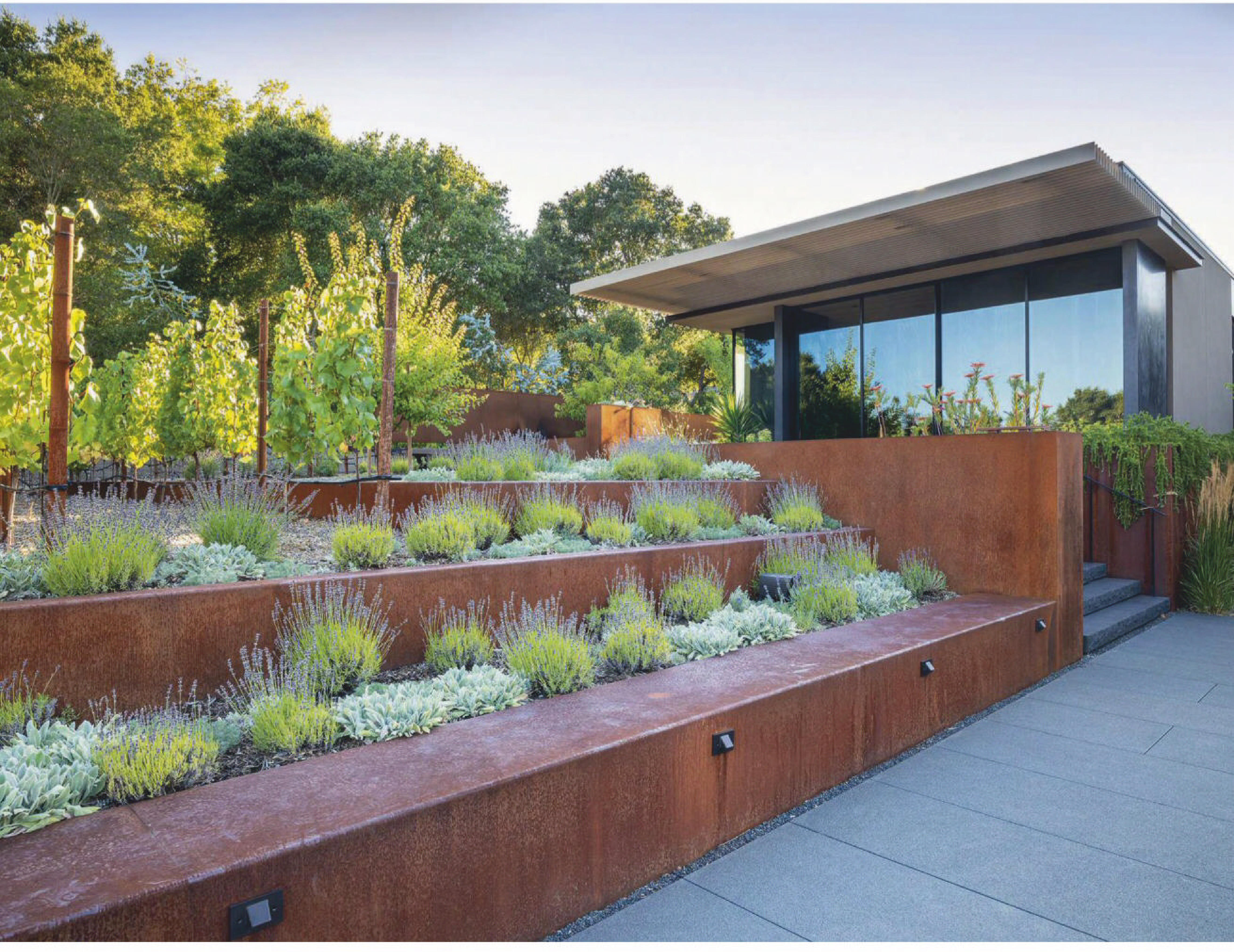


IN BRIEF

What Modernist courts meet meadow garden.
Where Woodside, California.
Size Three acres.
Soil Loamy clay.
Climate Mediterranean, with heavy rainfall in winter.
Hardiness zone USDA 9a.

Facing page *Muhlenbergia capillaris* Regal Mist (= 'Lenca'), seen here in the foreground, forms drifts of colour and movement, while *Juncus effusus*, *Juncus patens* 'Carman's Gray' and Siberian irises 'Caesar's Brother' and 'Sky Wings' line the drainage swale.

This page Terraces of Corten steel planted with *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote', *Stachys byzantina*, *Artemisia schmidtiana* and *Cerastium tomentosum* rise up to a micro-vineyard next to the guest house, which forms the last of the court pavilions facing the house.



Northern California remains one of the world's most exciting regions for landscape design, not least because it is possessed of numerous clients who want to experiment with naturalistic plantings on a large scale, usually set in a modernist architectural milieu. Surfacedesign is one of a number of San Francisco practices currently riding high on this wave of confidence.

At this three-acre rural property outside the small town of Woodside, on the inland side of the Santa Cruz Mountains, Surfacedesign was asked to create a garden of contrasting character around a new single-storey house complex (designed by architects Olson Kundig) that consists of a number of discrete pavilions arranged on a cruciform plan.

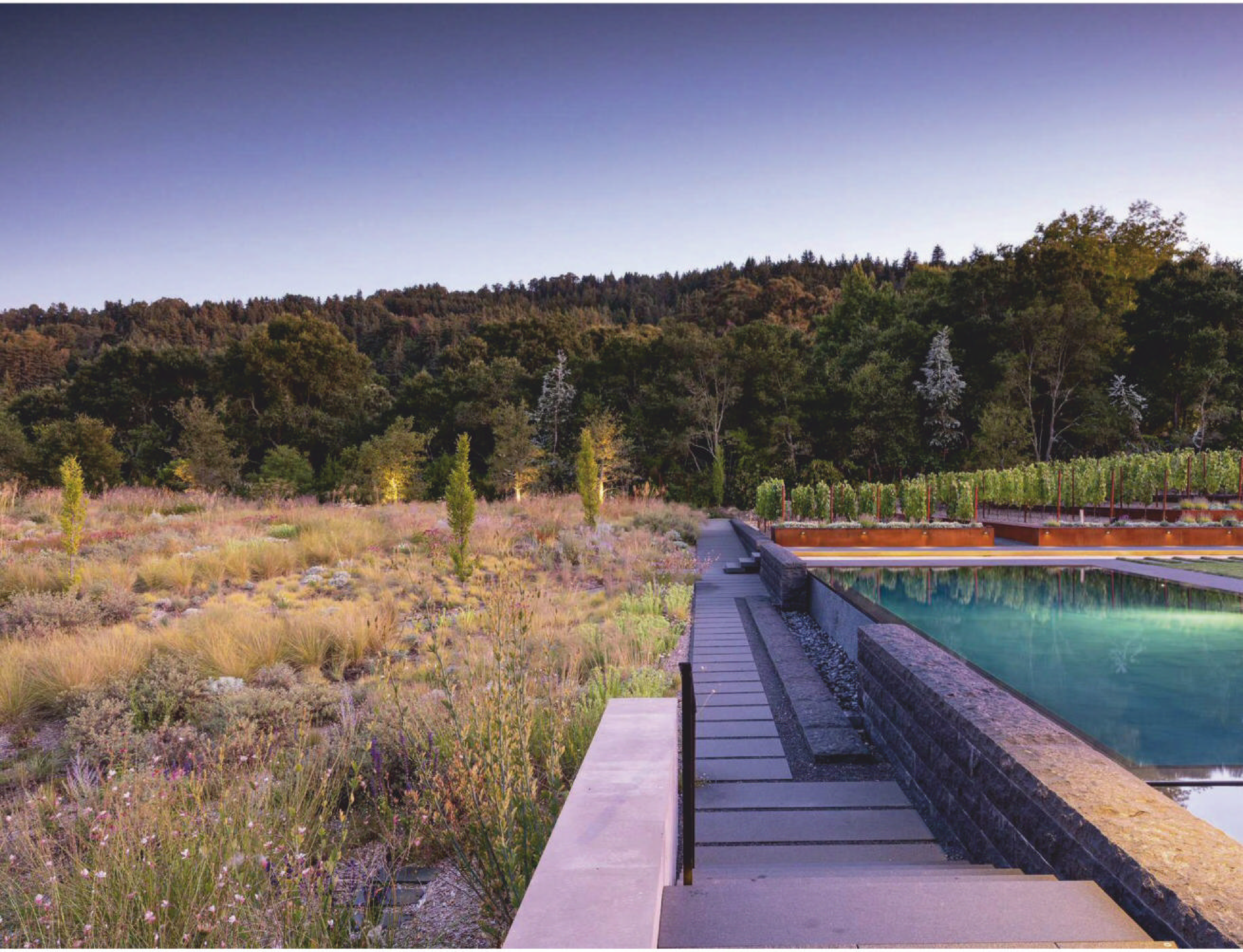
"What we inherited was basically a paddock on a sloping site," recalls James Lord, one of Surfacedesign's three partners. "The previous owners had horses and the soil was very compacted. We decided to organise the garden as two halves. As you enter, and in the areas around the buildings, it's a very structured environment, almost farm-like in essence. This contrasts with the other half, which is the meadow, much softer and with the exuberance of the vegetation."

The entrance drive sets up the farm atmosphere, threading through a grove of some 60 characterful, 150-year-old olive trees (a decommissioned orchard, acquired and then transplanted here). These are underplanted with lavender and specimens of the dwarf olive *Olea europaea* Little Ollie (= 'Montra') echoing the canopy above.

Then there is a shock: the entrance court is planted up with what is described as a 'museum' of cactus and succulent species set amid rocks. James says this has been deliberately engineered. There is further intrigue from the sound of water – emanating from a number of raised pools set in the courts around the building complex. Banks of *Equisetum* ▷

Facing page The entrance drive winds through a 150-year-old olive orchard, transplanted to the property. The olive trees are underplanted with rows of *Lavandula* x *intermedia* Phenomenal (= 'Niko) and a dwarf olive tree, *Olea europaea* Little Ollie (= 'Montra').

This page A basalt wall separates the more formal courts from the meadow, where *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies', in the foreground, along with *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna', *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' and *Cistus* x *skanbergii* add long-lasting colour.



▷ *hyemale* line the pools, set against Corten steel walls with a ridged texture.

Near the house the garden is set out in a series of terraces or courts, set on ascending levels, all loosely delineated by means of steps and low walls. Each has a different function: a swimming pool, a bocce court, a fire pit. One is associated with a bar building, another with a guest suite. The stone paving throughout is notched and grooved to allow for run-off (winter rainfall can be high in this Mediterranean climate). The final level is a micro-vineyard, which looks larger than it is, yet still produces enough grapes to contribute to a local wine-making co-operative. The vines are set in Corten steel boxes that create informal sitting spaces.

By the time you reach this micro-vineyard, you've progressed from the rural feel of the olive grove to a dream of Californian minimalism, albeit with an agrarian spin. But the garden's greatest asset awaits: an expansive meadow that stretches across nearly half the site. "We were interested in merging a native palette with an ornamental meadow," James explains. "We achieved that partly by re-grading the site and creating a couple of small hills or mounds to create the illusion of a more natural landscape with a shallow valley running through. This gave us different conditions for drift-planting, from the tops of the hills where it is drier, to lower down, where it gets wetter."

James says that the thinking behind this diversity was to create several peak moments across the year, with the drifts of flowering perennials – bolstered by evergreen sub-shrubs – at their overall structural best by late summer.

Three base matrix plantings set the tone: the grasses *Bouteloua gracilis* 'Blonde Ambition' and *Eragrostis elliottii* 'Wind Dancer', in golden hues; cooler tones from *Bouteloua curtipendul*a and *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'The Blues'; and finally the rush *Juncus effusus* in the wet swales.

An effort has been made to create all-season interest by means of certain perennial plants and shrubs (see box right) ▷

SEVEN RECOMMENDED STRUCTURAL MEADOW PLANTS

Juncus effusus This rush intermingles with *Juncus patens* 'Carman's Gray' to provide a green matrix in damper areas throughout the year. 1.2m. USDA 4a-9b†.
***Muhlenbergia capillaris* Regal Mist (= 'Lenca')** Drifts across the meadow just as most other perennials are fading out, surprising with a last burst of pink. 90cm. USDA 5a-9b.
Ceratostigma willmottianum Red stems provide an interesting contrast against the grasses after it loses its leaves. 1m. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Cistus* x *skanbergii A low-growing rock rose with a profusion of pink flowers in spring. 80cm.
***Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'** Benefits from some trimming in winter, but can provide some structure. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H3, USDA 6a-9b
***Salvia leucophylla* x *S. clevelandii* 'Pozo Blue'** This deep-blue cultivar stays below waist level, is very drought-tolerant and highly scented in hot weather. 1.2m. USDA 8a-10b.
Eriogonum giganteum Giant California buckwheat with white flowers in May that fade to rust in autumn. It's one of three species of *Eriogonum* used in the garden along with *E. fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum*, which has white pom-poms that fade to rust, and, the smallest of the three, *E. grande* var. *rubescens*, with pink-red flowers. All provide excellent habitat for birds and pollinators. 1.2m.

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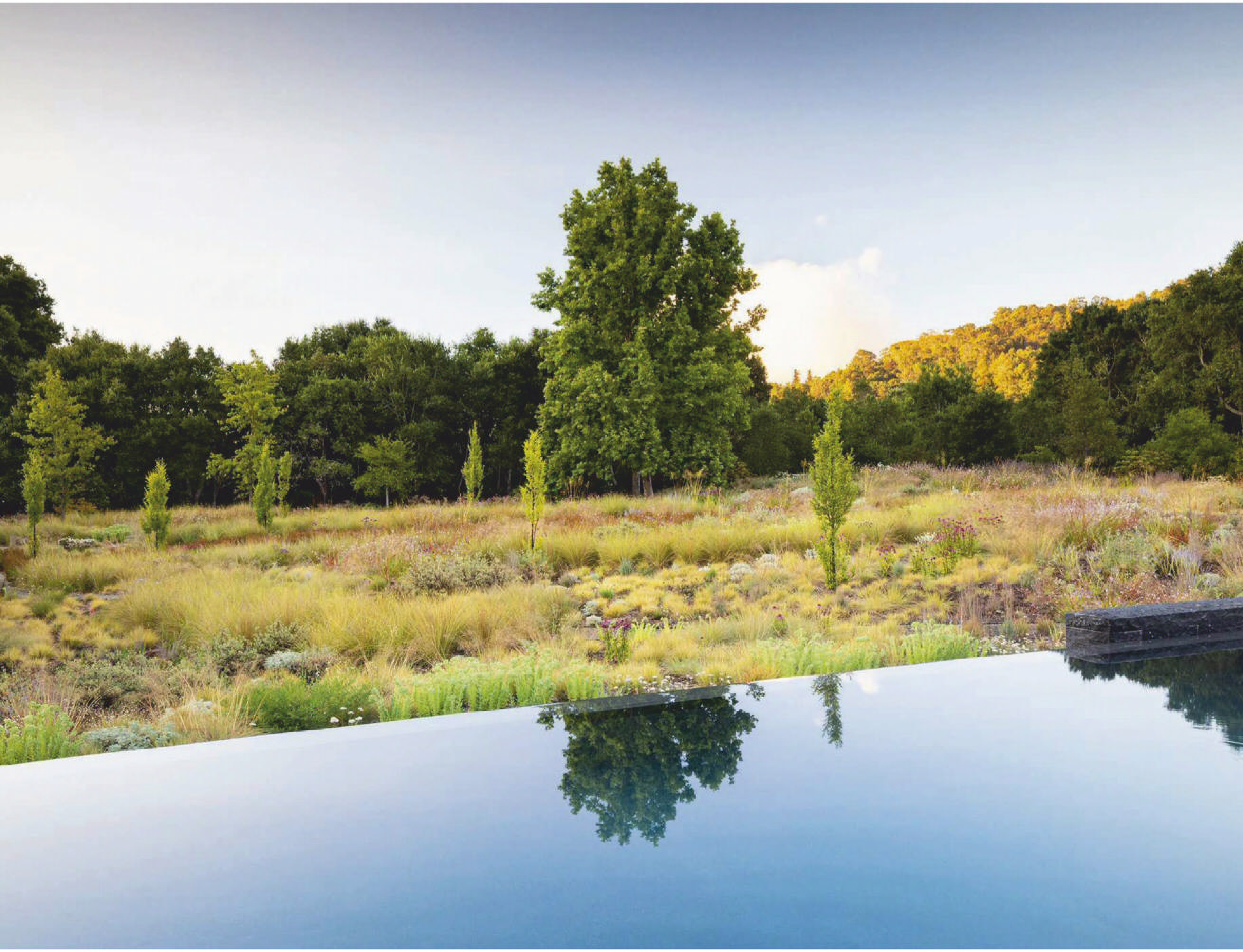
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

Facing page This section of the 'cactus museum', is dedicated to grey-blue and silvery cacti and succulents, including from left *Cereus repandus* 'Monstrosus', *Agave* 'Blue Glow', *Agave* 'Sharkskin Shoes' and *Cleistocactus strausii*. The wider cacti collection can be glimpsed through the opening.

This page The swimming pool's infinity ledge allows bathers a view out over the meadow where the columnar hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus* 'Frans Fontaine') create a sense of structure with what the designers describe as their almost human-like appearance.



▷ together with columnar hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus* 'Frans Fontaine') that drift across the meadow. "We got that idea from something we saw in Porto, Portugal," James reveals. "There were these sentinel trees that just floated through the garden." More internal structure is created by drifts of *Stipa gigantea* and dwarf *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Little Kitten'.

The perennial drift plantings are based around simple but strong pairings, such as *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' with *Echinacea purpurea*; *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies' with *Perovskia* 'Little Spire'; *Erigeron karvinskianus* and the evergreen rock rose *Cistus* x *skanbergii*; and *Achillea* 'Paprika' with *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'.

Earlier in the season come mingled groups of *Iris* 'Sky Wings' with *I.* 'Caesar's Brother'. Overall there is a pleasingly soft and ragged feel to the meadow, which generally bubbles along at a low level, with less of the strident, colour-block histrionics of some examples of naturalistic drift-planting.

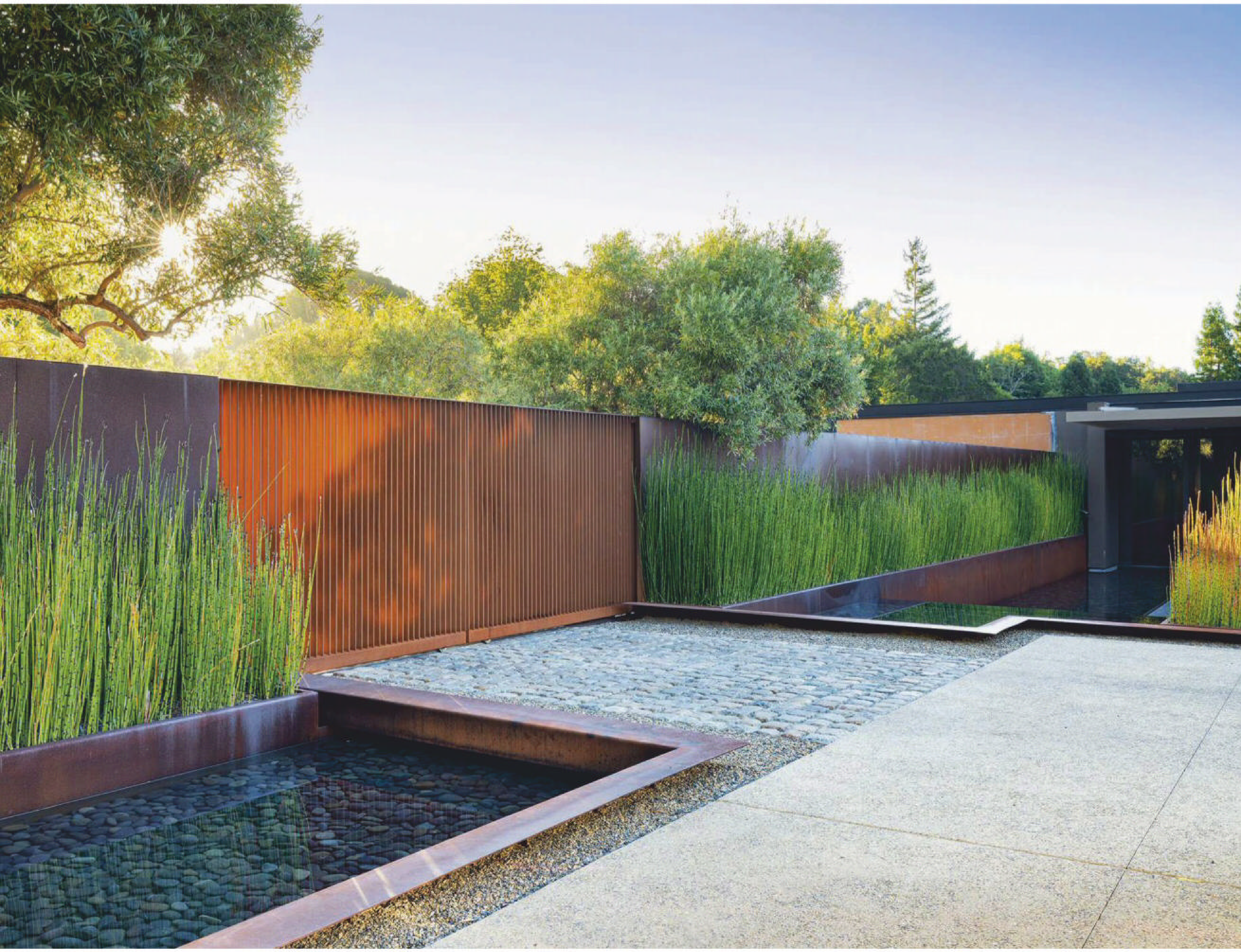
Framing the meadow is a transition edge of native perennials and evergreen shrubs that stitches with the surrounding landscape – plants such as *Romneya coulteri*, *Ceanothus griseus* var. *horizontalis* 'Yankee Point', *Eriogonum* species, *Aesculus californica* and *Myrica californica*. The native woodland itself has also been augmented, with Californian live oaks and redwoods, *Cornus kousa* and suitable shrubs such as the Japanese snowball bush *Viburnum plicatum*, *Hydrangea quercifolia* and *Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum*.

With snaking paths made through it all, the recipe adds up to a beguiling non-garden that feels like an extension of the natural landscape. Surfacedesign's clients have commissioned several designers in the past, but say they have never spent as much time in their garden, as here. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Surfacedesign's work at **sdisf.com**

Facing page The striking modernist house sits in stark contrast to the natural meadow that links the courts of the house to the native woodland beyond. Large windows offer the master bedroom on the lower level, wide views out of this mass of colourful perennial planting.

This page Massed *Equisetum hyemale* is set against Corten walls on either side of a Corten steel gate. The upright nature of the rush mirrors the gate's narrow but deep pickets, which make it appear virtually transparent when you are standing in front of it but solid when it is seen at an angle.



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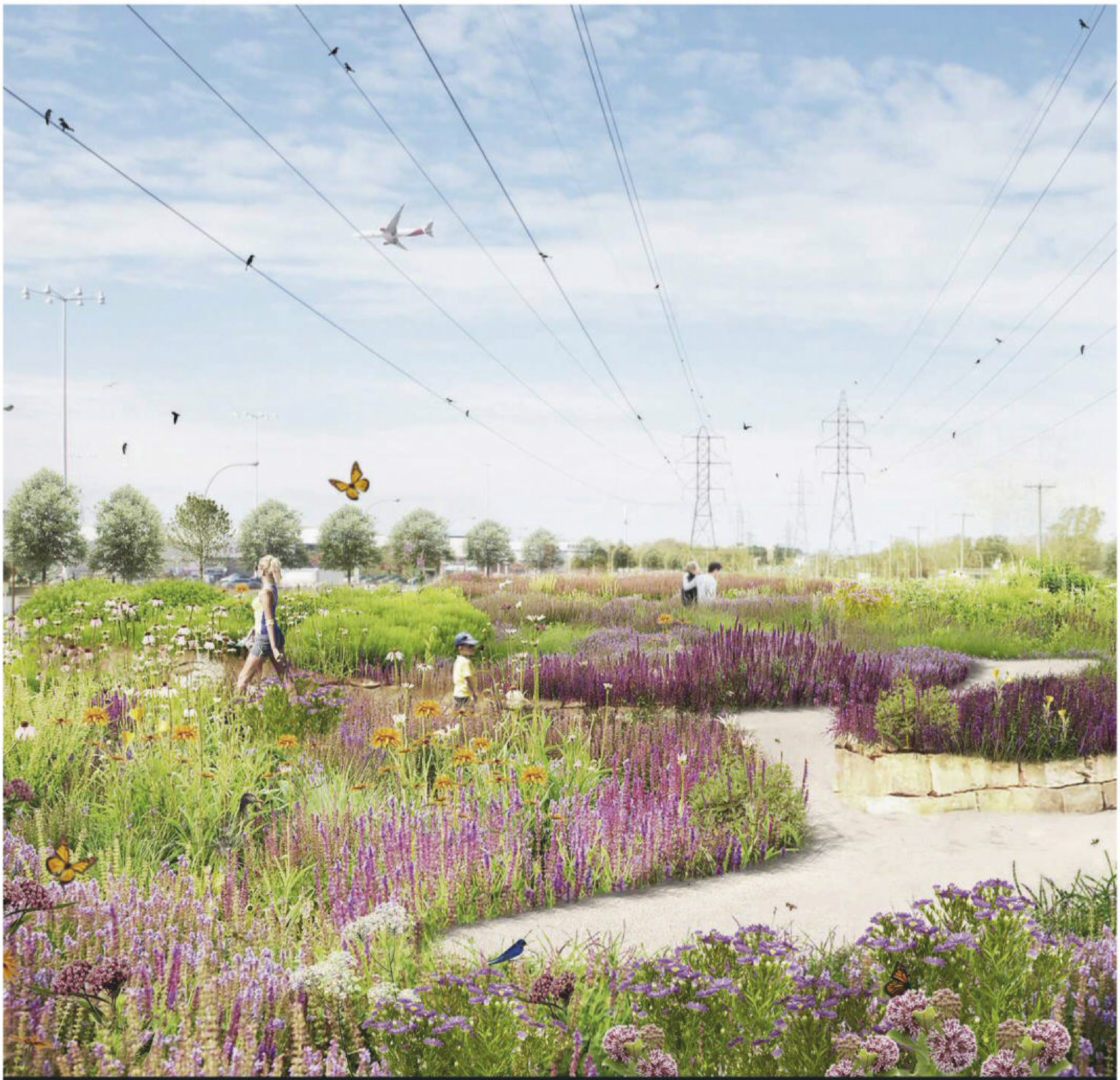
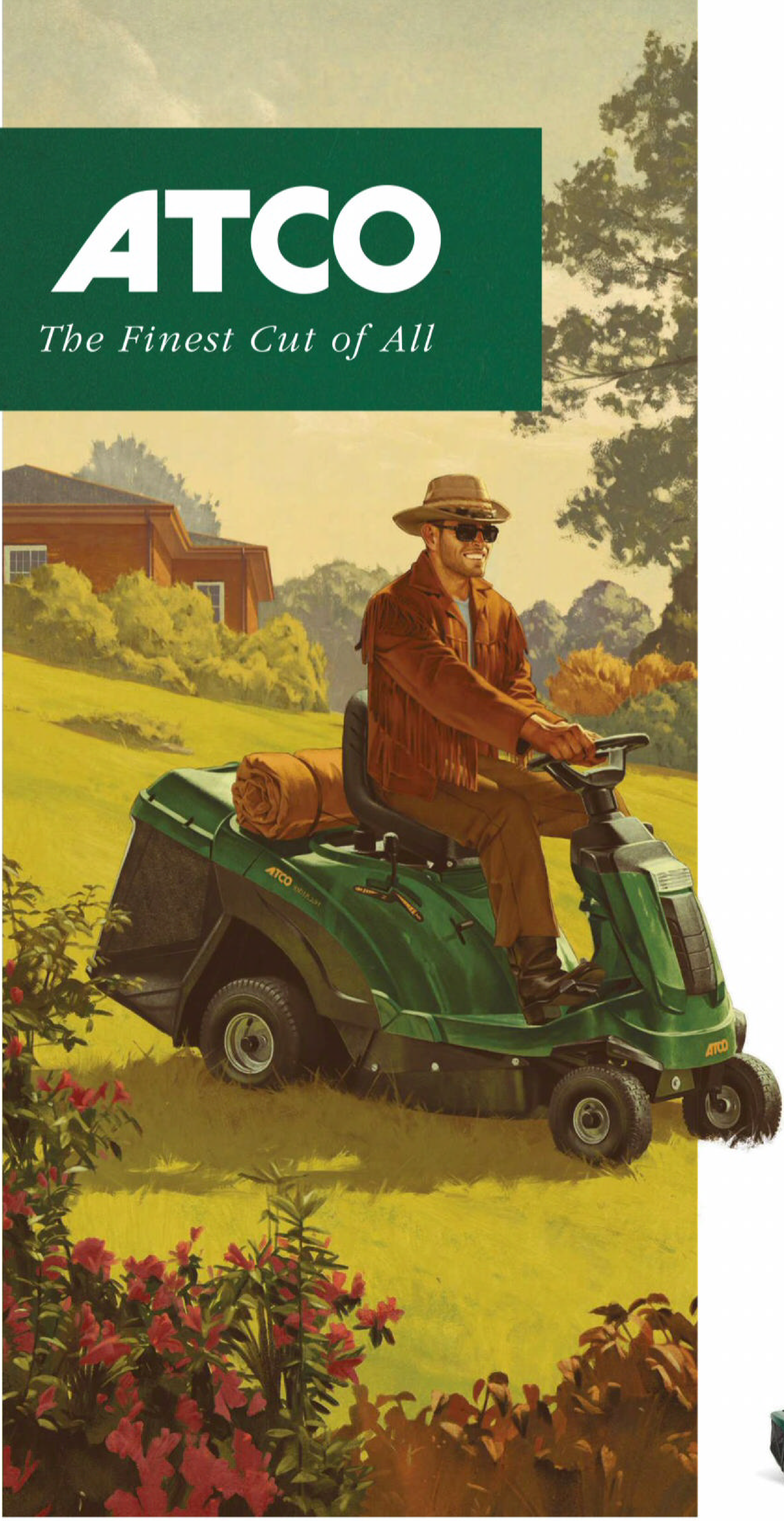


BIODIVERSITY CORRIDOR AWARD

A scheme to create a biodiverse corridor beneath giant powerlines in Montreal, has won the Sustainable Development Award in Canada's National Urban Design Awards 2020. Designed by landscape architects civiliti, LAND Italia, Table Architecture and ecologists Biodiversité conseil Inc, the 450-hectare corridor will link fragmented woodlands such as Parc Marcel-Lauren and the Cavendish woodlands, with tree-lined strips, flowering meadows and wetlands providing a series of habitats for wildlife. A 'green' bridge is proposed for the northern part of the corridor, and observation towers will offer views across the surrounding area. The scheme will be delivered in phases. **civiliti.com**



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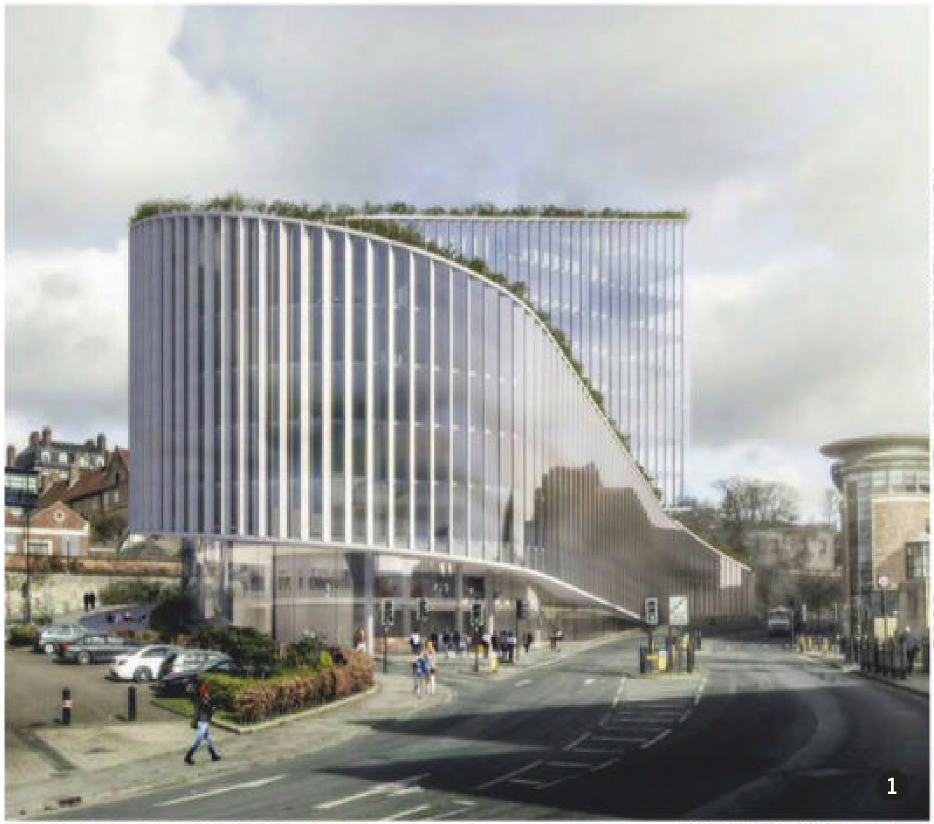
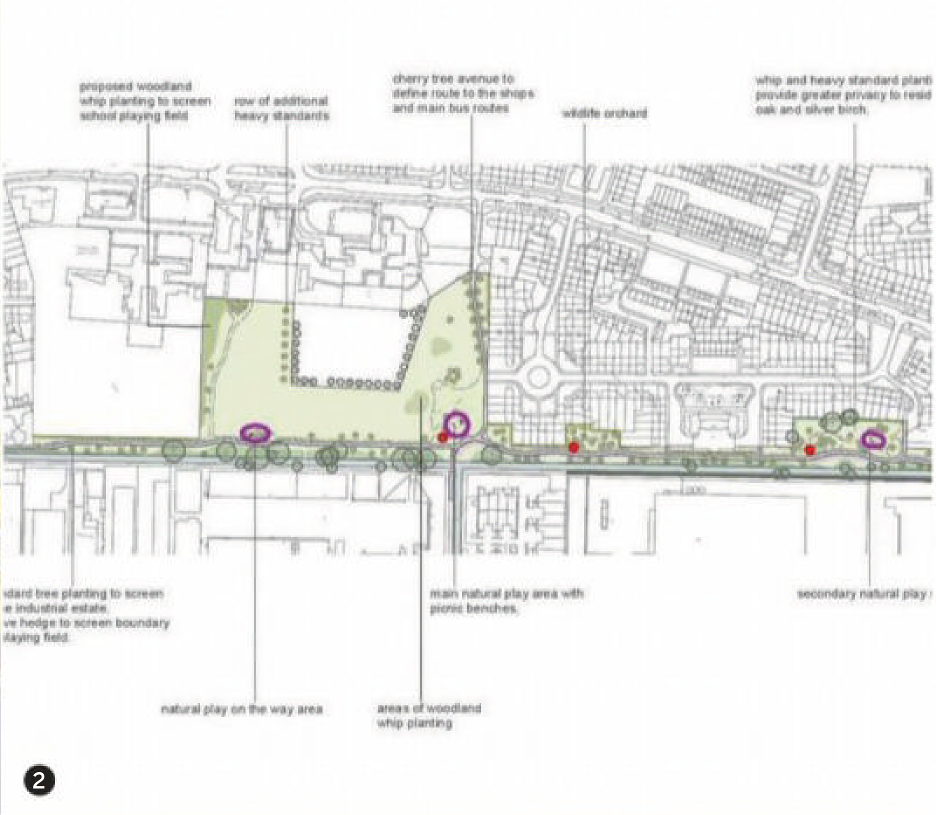
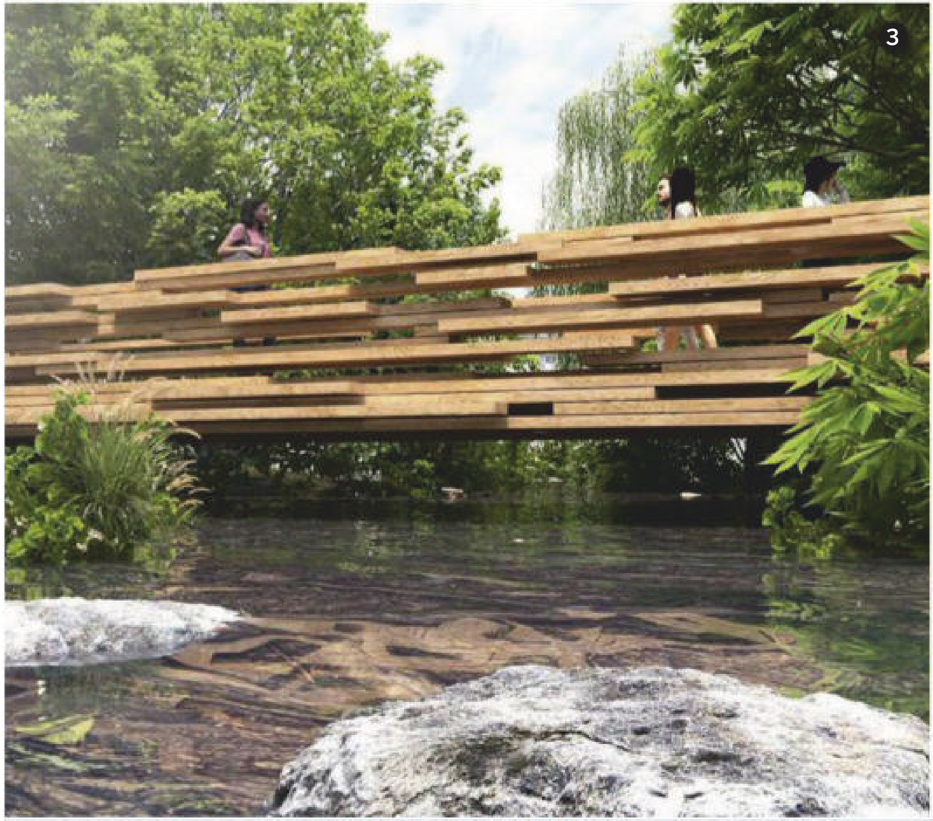



proposed woodland
whip planting to screen
school playing field
row of additional
heavy standards
cherry tree avenue to
define route to the shops
and main bus routes
wildlife orchard
whip and heavy standard planti
provide greater privacy to resid
oak and silver birch.
ndard tree planting to screen
e industrial estate.
ve hedge to screen boundary
laying field.
main natural play area with
picnic benches.
secondary natural play
natural play on the way area
areas of woodland
whip planting
2



① STEREO NO 1 QUAYSIDE

The London office of the Danish firm BIG architects has designed a 12-storey office building, with a green roof, that overlooks the River Tyne in Newcastle upon Tyne. The new building has a snaking form that follows the hairpin curve in the road beneath it, and echoes the city's sloping hills and curved bridges. Stereo No. 1 Quayside, which is being built in collaboration with local studio Xsite Architecture, is located on a vacant site bordered by major roads on all sides. External steps lead up through a cascade of roof terraces, one for each floor, to the green roof at the top. **big.dk**

② RIVERSIDE REGENERATION

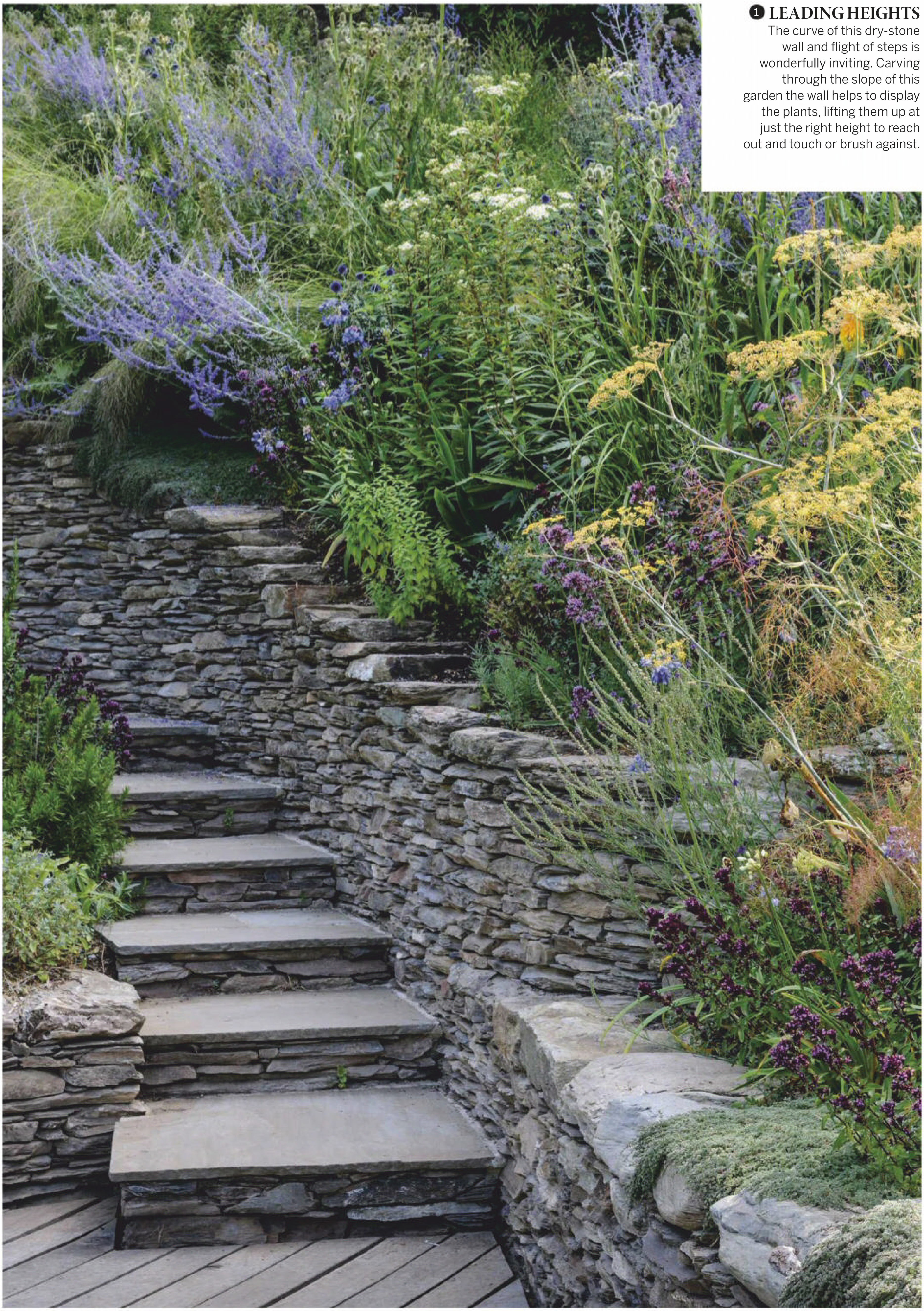
A run-down green space that links the River Thames at Barking Riverside to Barking town centre is being transformed by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Sustrans and Trees for Cities into a cycle and walking route, a nature play area and fully accessible space for the community. Planting of native trees such as oak, rowan and hawthorn, an avenue of cherries and a small orchard has already got underway at the renamed Ripple Greenway and it is hoped that play areas and exercise points will be added this summer. **lbbd.gov.uk/ripple-greenway-project**

③ EXPLODED VIEW BRIDGE

British designer Paul Cocksedge has designed a bridge over Liesbeek River in Cape Town using cross-laminated timber harvested from Eucalyptus trees, a more sustainable alternative to steel and concrete. The innovative design is derived from an 'exploded' view of stacked planks of wood that makes the bridge seem to blend in and out of the landscape. On the inside, lines of timber converge to create benches from which people can enjoy the views through the gaps. The project is a collaboration with Design Indaba, a platform for design in Africa, and building company X-LAM. **paulcocksedgestudio.com**

④ GRANTON VISION

A new vision for Edinburgh's Waterfront has been drawn up by Glasgow-based practice Collective Architecture in association with Studio for New Realities. The scheme aims to protect and extend existing green spaces and transform former industrial land into a climate resilient location where people want to live and work. The development framework prioritises pedestrian streets and low-carbon travel, and maximises the existing terraced topography with linear developments that capitalise on sea views. Existing features, such as the gas holder, will be protected within a green loop. **collectivearchitecture.com**



❶ **LEADING HEIGHTS**
The curve of this dry-stone wall and flight of steps is wonderfully inviting. Carving through the slope of this garden the wall helps to display the plants, lifting them up at just the right height to reach out and touch or brush against.

JASON INGRAM

Walls

Whether they are used to create a boundary, define a space or to frame a view, walls are the structural bones of garden design

WORDS ANDY STURGEON

Architecture in some shape or form is a part of almost any garden yet we seldom think of it as the main ingredient, probably because as gardeners our minds naturally gravitate towards the beauty of plants. But even boundary walls can contribute much to the atmosphere of a garden. Faced with something of a blank canvas I would initially create an organised structure, frequently with free-standing and retaining walls and then use greenery to flesh out the bones afterwards.

Walls can be an invaluable device for defining space by creating separate areas in a garden. They can guide the eye towards a distant focal point, framing a vista, and can simultaneously hide less glamorous parts of the garden: an unkempt vegetable patch or perhaps a covered swimming pool. Strategically placed retaining walls can make useful flat surfaces. But walls can also be the main event, a plinth or backdrop for stately pots, or the sort of curvaceous dry-stone sculptural affair in the style of Andy Goldsworthy. Classical layouts, Renaissance gardens and famously the collaboration of Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll are all about this sort of structured framework and usually there is a fair amount of brick or stone involved.

> Walls make a wonderful foil for planting, providing a superb contrast of hard and soft. Green leaves against rich orangey brown Corten steel or black timber simply looks awesome

Size and scale are important. Too tall can feel intimidating and soulless, too short and they go almost unnoticed and contribute little, especially if they get hidden by the plants in front. A wall at 1.5m can make a seating area intimate and shield you from nearby neighbours, yet when you stand up you can see over the top and views are kept open. A curved wall can enclose a space to make it inviting. A straight wall can encourage faster walking alongside. If the budget won't stretch as far as you want then you can supplement walls with cheaper green architecture. Or hedges, as they are sometimes known.

By day, walls can make a wonderful foil for planting, providing a superb contrast of hard and soft. Green leaves against rich orangey brown Corten steel or black timber cladding simply looks awesome. At night, with lighting any wall can take on a beauty of its own as it emerges from the shadows. The vertical planes emphasise the third dimension when you bounce light off them, silhouetting the shapes of architectural plant forms in the foreground. Alternatively you can wash a wall with light from above or below, picking out the rough texture of stone and brickwork as the light grazes the surface. Direct a beam on to gently moving water and you can project dancing ripples on to a wall at the water's edge. The effect is entrancing.

There is something deep in our psyche that makes us respond to natural materials. Stone walls should ideally use a local material to tie it into the surroundings. The vernacular style of building can be employed perhaps with a traditional dry-stone look but a more uniform crisp coursing of cropped stone can feel immediately modern without losing any of the warmth of the material itself.

Most of the fine houses in Bath or the Portland stone found on Buckingham Palace are good traditional examples of ashlar, smooth, finely cut stone cladding with tight joints, yet in a garden setting this look tends to feel quite contemporary. Gabion baskets are equally modern and are a relatively inexpensive solution especially for retaining walls. Wire baskets can be assembled and filled with stone, and I hear it can be a good family event to put the children to work. Waste materials from the site including brick and concrete can fill them or something a little fancier can be put in the visible face to smarten things up.

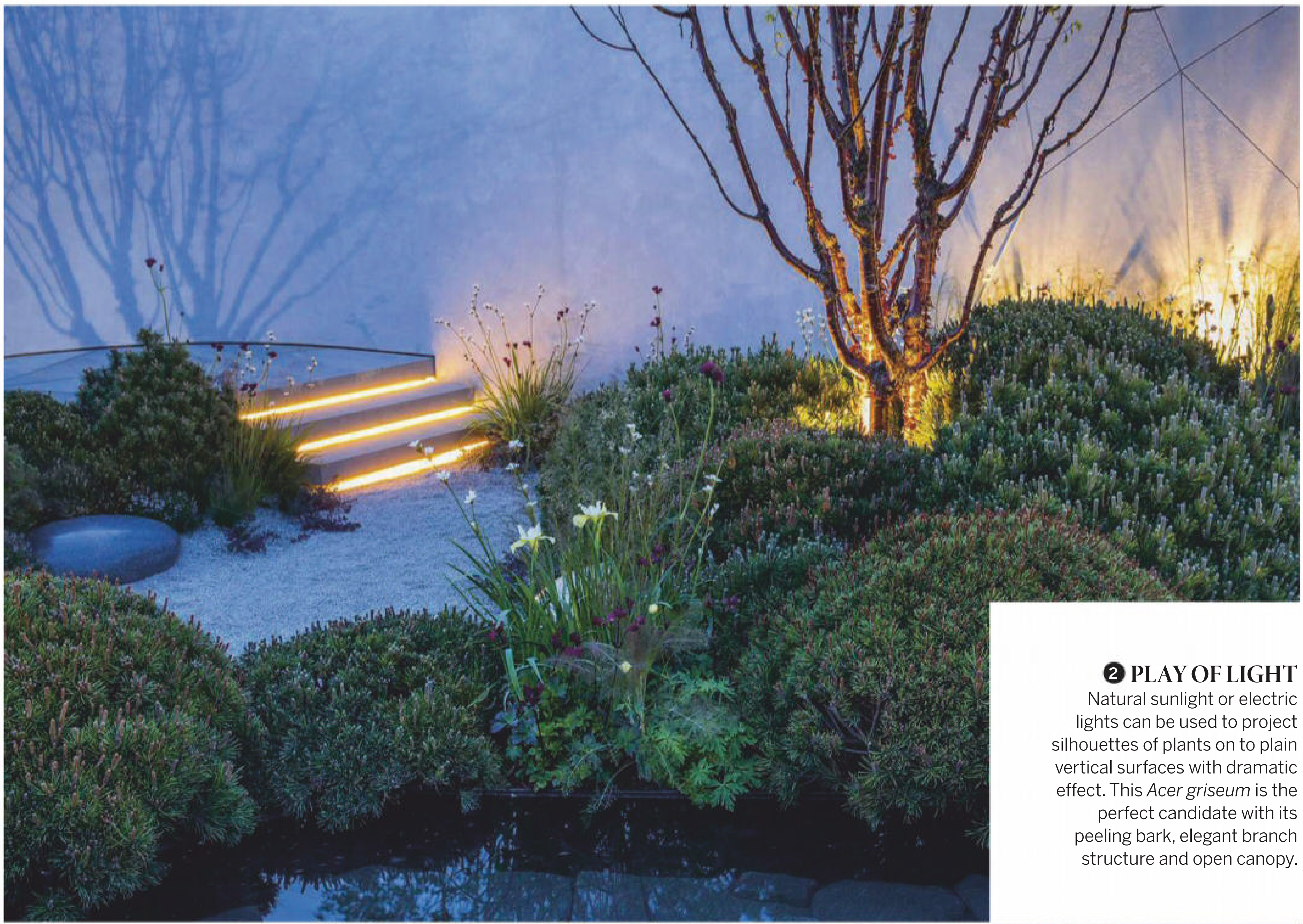
The choice of material is a useful way to make strong visual connection with the house itself. A combination of brick and stone often works well, and echoing the brick in step risers and other details makes for a really cohesive design.

If your budget is limited then a good solution is rendered and painted blockwork with a stone coping. Don't skimp on the thickness of the stone or it will look cheap. Anything less than 30mm is risky. A coping is essential to keep frost and penetrating water out of the wall and it must overhang and have a drip groove cut in the underside to shed water or it will run own the wall and makes streaks.

Turning a sloping garden into terraced flat areas can be an engineering feat. Try to minimise the number of walls not just because of the expense but because of the visual impact. For safety you can plant above walls to keep people away from the edge and at the bottom to break their fall. Children, adults, dogs and gardeners are all at risk. Just avoid roses and *Berberis*. □

Andy Sturgeon is an internationally renowned landscape and garden designer. He is the winner of eight Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, including Best in Show in 2019. **andysturgeon.com**

Turn the page for more ideas on walls ▷

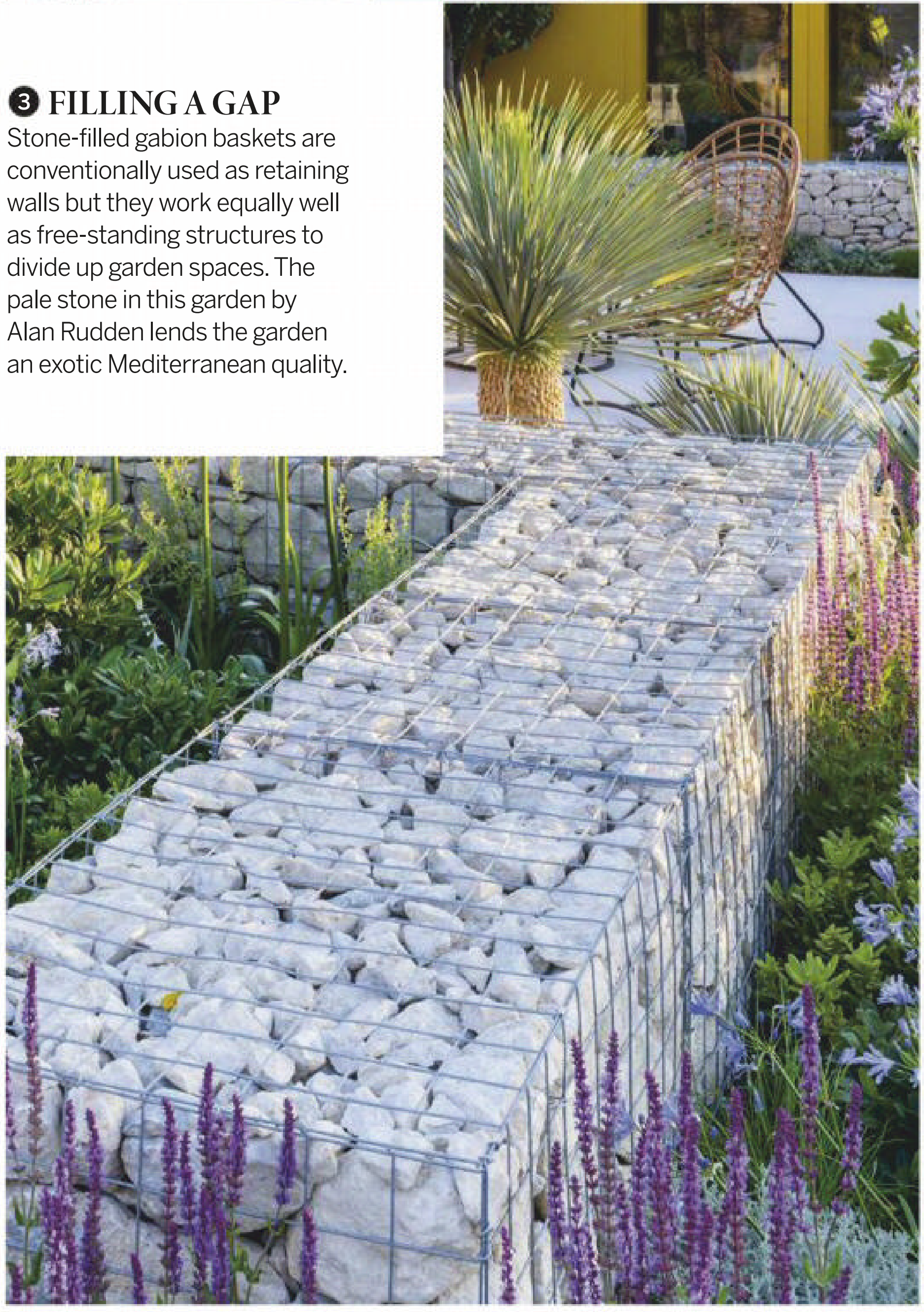


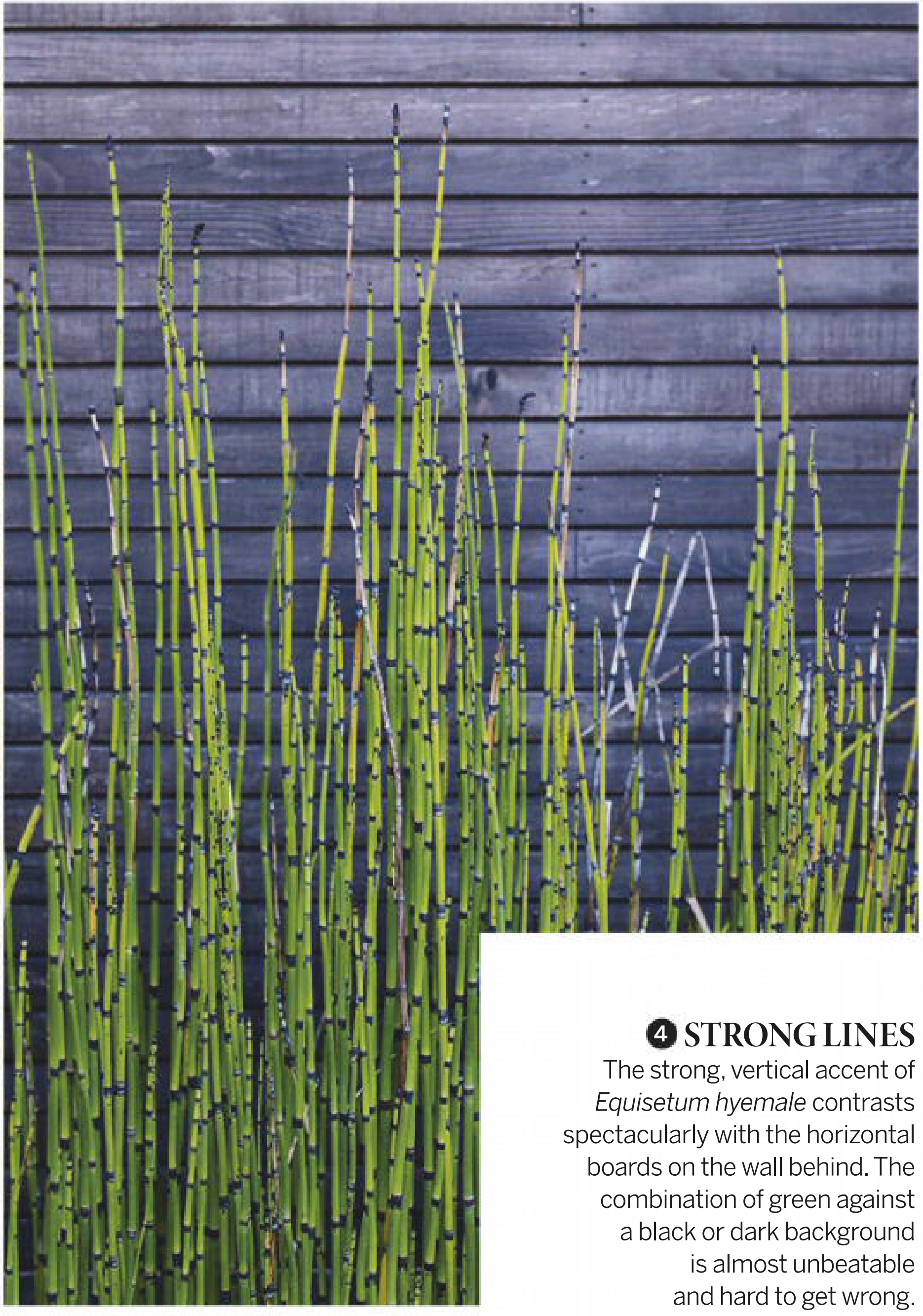
② PLAY OF LIGHT

Natural sunlight or electric lights can be used to project silhouettes of plants on to plain vertical surfaces with dramatic effect. This *Acer griseum* is the perfect candidate with its peeling bark, elegant branch structure and open canopy.

③ FILLING A GAP

Stone-filled gabion baskets are conventionally used as retaining walls but they work equally well as free-standing structures to divide up garden spaces. The pale stone in this garden by Alan Rudden lends the garden an exotic Mediterranean quality.





④ STRONG LINES

The strong, vertical accent of *Equisetum hyemale* contrasts spectacularly with the horizontal boards on the wall behind. The combination of green against a black or dark background is almost unbeatable and hard to get wrong.

2 MARIANNE MAJERUS GARDEN IMAGES, DESIGN MATT KEIGHTLEY; 3 ANNA OMIOTEK-TOTT / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGNER ALAN RUDDEN, SPONSOR SANTA RITA WINES; 4 JASON INGRAM.

In bloom

Get back to nature and read about the beauty of Stourhead, the National Trust's world-famous landscape garden

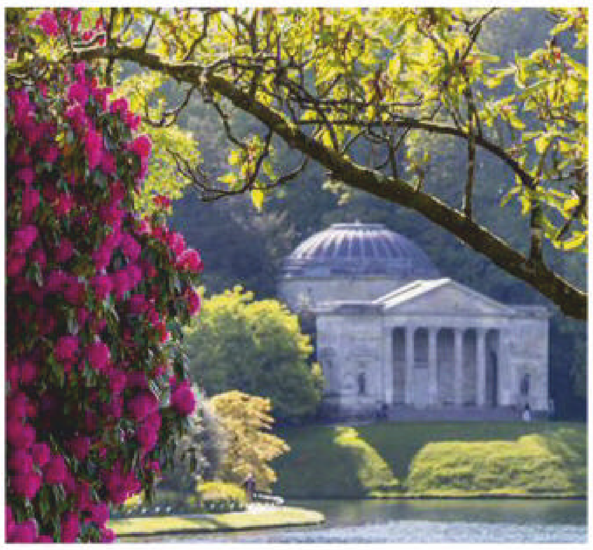
Fiery reds, buttery yellows, rich purples… Stourhead is a garden that's awash with brilliant colours. When the Wiltshire garden first opened its doors in the 1740s, one admirer described it as a 'living work of art' – and it's not hard to see why. Stourhead is truly a delight for the senses, and it smells as beautiful as it looks. The garden has a bouquet of wonderful scents – from the honey-sweet scent of the lime trees to the spicy aroma of the witch hazel – that gently fills the air.

Hidden treasures

Beyond the garden, Stourhead has plenty of other gems. Along the quiet paths, there's ancient history and mythology, with classical buildings such as the Temple of Flora, dedicated to the Roman goddess of flowers and spring, and the iconic Pantheon, which is filled with statues of classical deities.

Across the 2,650-acre estate, there's also the grand Palladian villa Stourhead House, which dates back to 1725, the quaint village of Stourton, a farm shop, two cosy country pubs – The Spread Eagle Inn and The Red Lion at Kilmington, two Iron Age hillforts, and a historic triangular folly known as King Alfred's Tower. The whole estate is protected and cared for by the National Trust, so everything has been meticulously conserved and continues to thrive to this day.

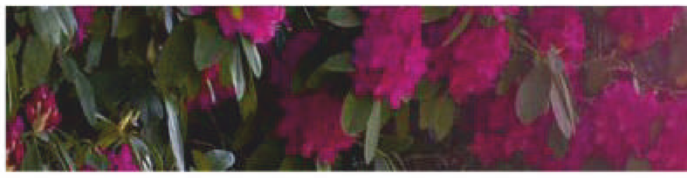
Stourhead has inspired garden designers for centuries. So, once you're able, pay a visit to this marvellous estate. With its extravagant blooms, exotic trees and rich history, Stourhead offers a day of adventure and discovery.



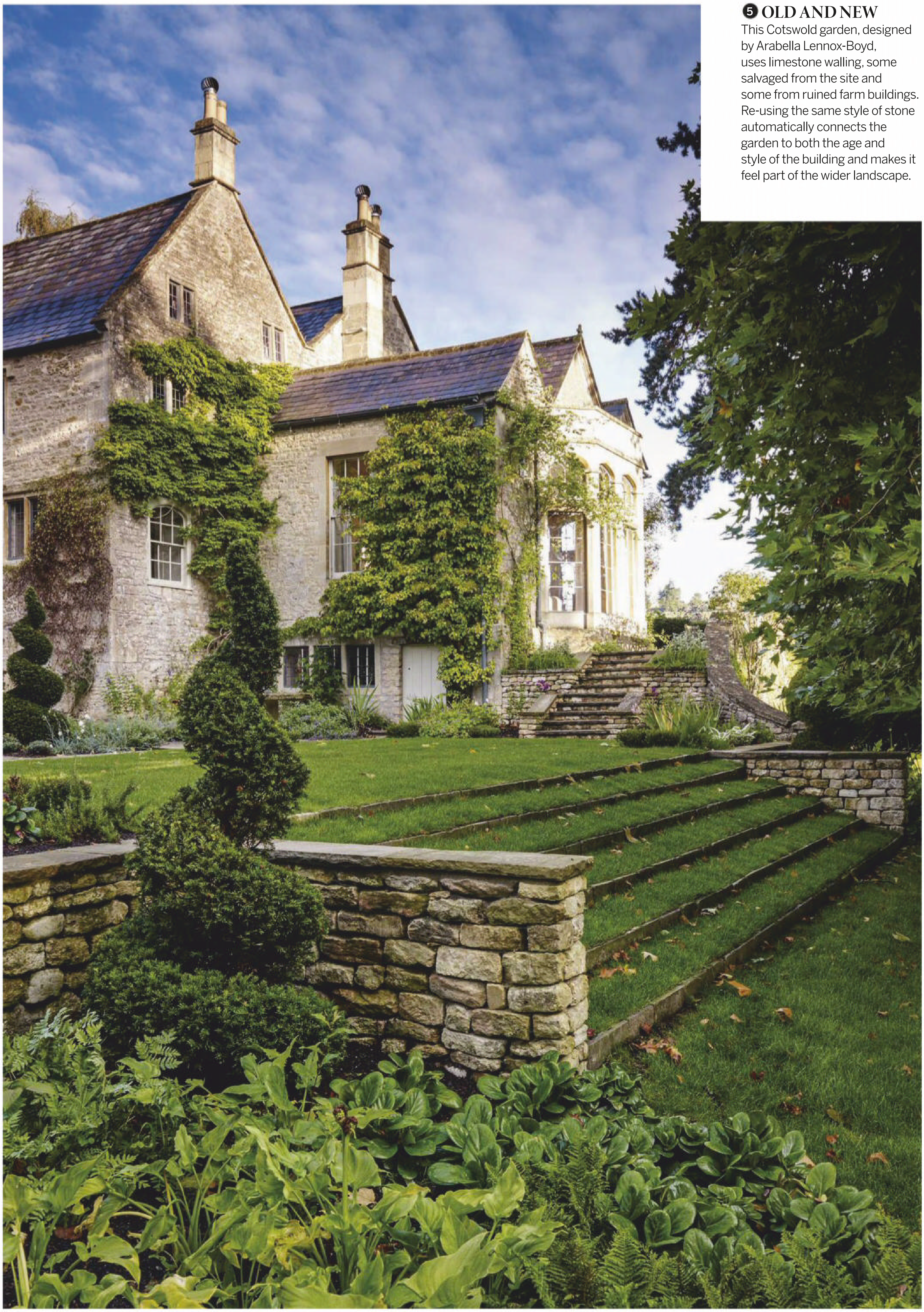
©National Trust Images/Trevor Ray Hart.

At the time of going to press, Stourhead is temporarily closed. Check the website for the latest information.

National Trust



NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK/STOURHEAD



⑤ OLD AND NEW

This Cotswold garden, designed by Arabella Lennox-Boyd, uses limestone walling, some salvaged from the site and some from ruined farm buildings. Re-using the same style of stone automatically connects the garden to both the age and style of the building and makes it feel part of the wider landscape.

JASON INGRAM

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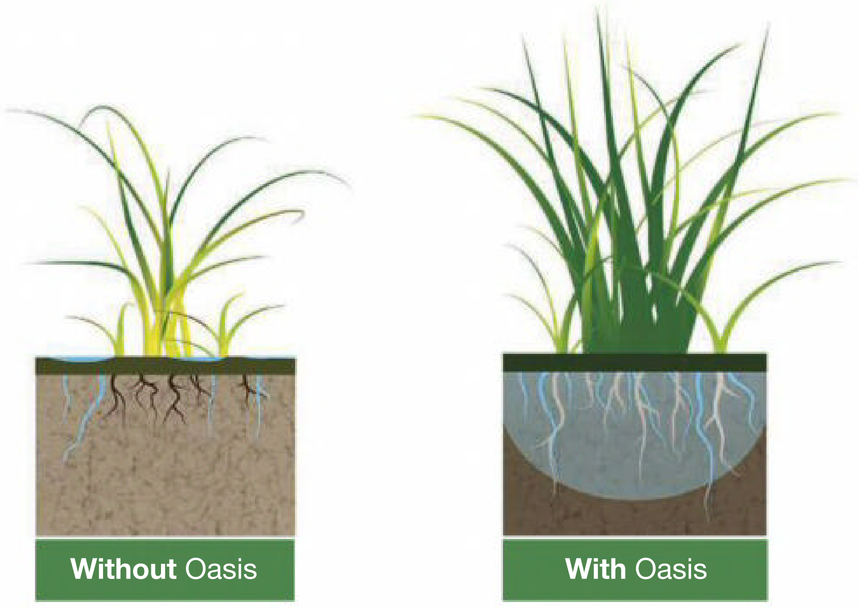

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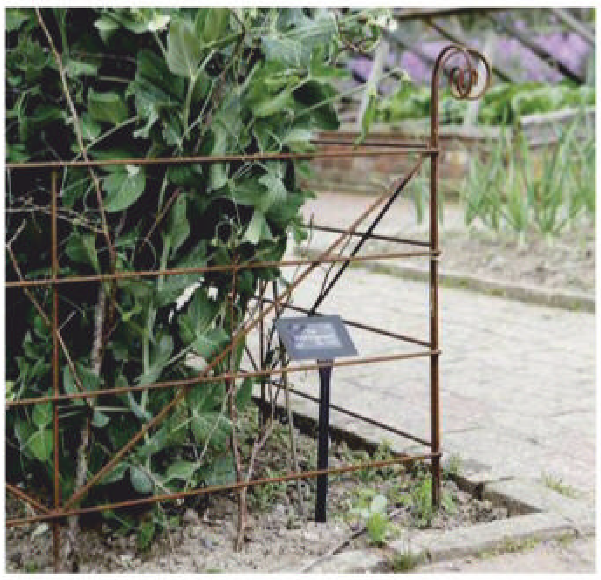

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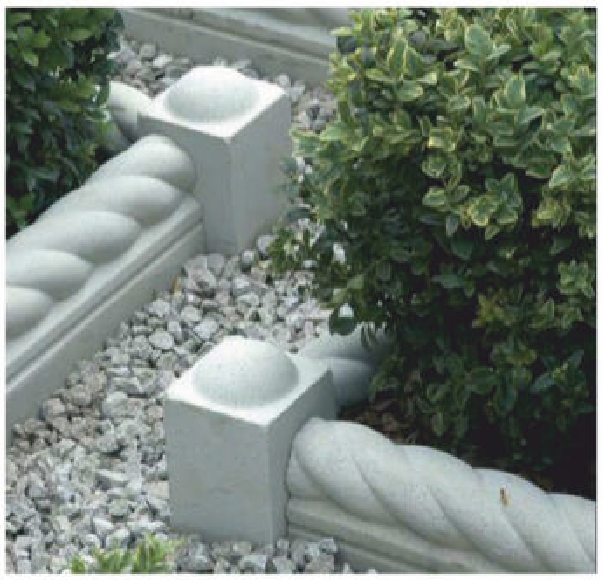
01363 84514, plantbelles.co.uk



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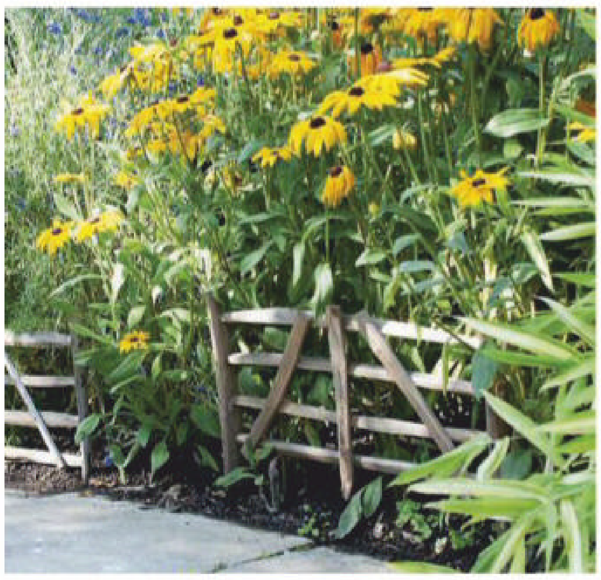
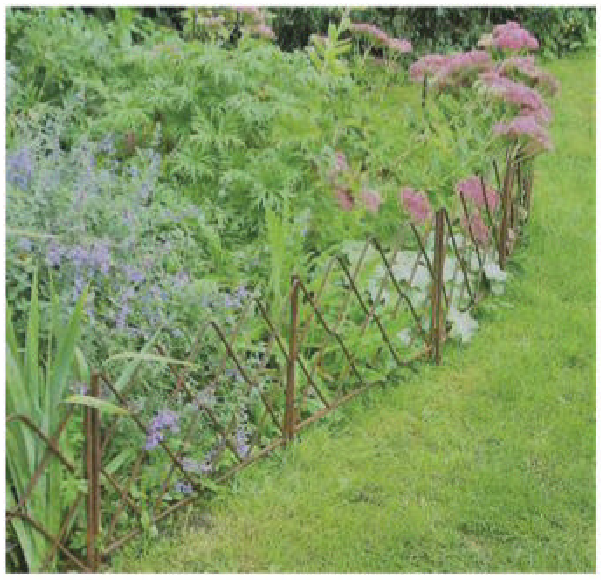
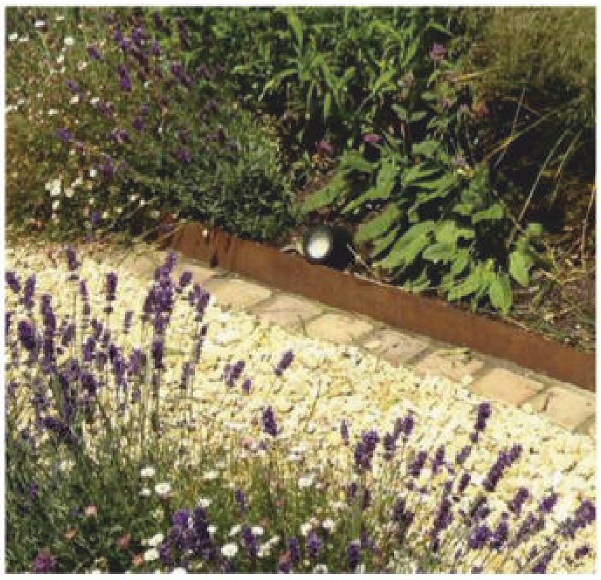
£21 for 458mm section, Haddon Stone,
01604 266000, haddonstone.com



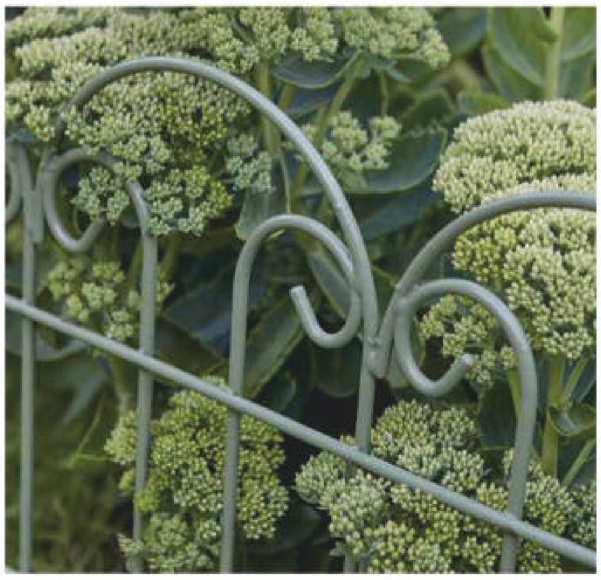
WOODEN
Chestnut Hurdle,
£21.50 each, Great Dixter Shop,
01797 254044, greatdixter.co.uk



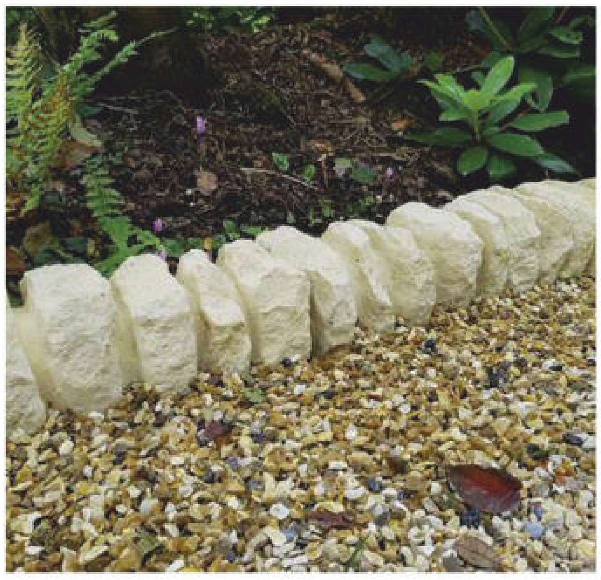
LATTICED
Latticework Edging,
£28.50 each, Leander Plant Supports,
01773 550495, leanderplantsupports.co.uk



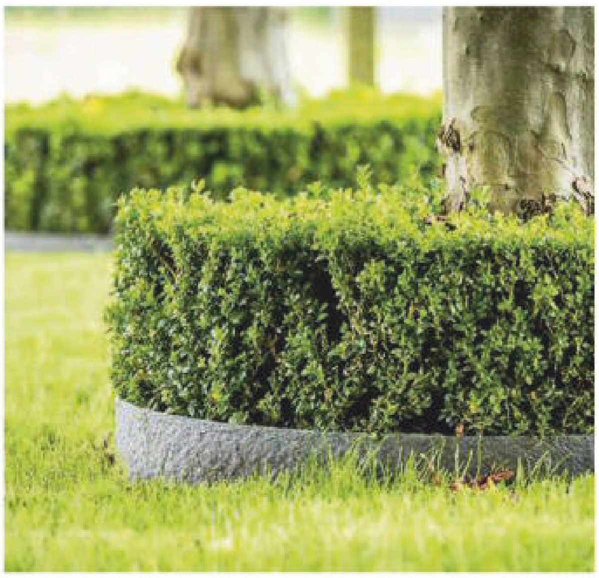
LINEAR
Everedge Classic Lawn Edging Corten,
£59.99 for five 1m sections, Greenfingers,
01506 605157, greenfingers.com



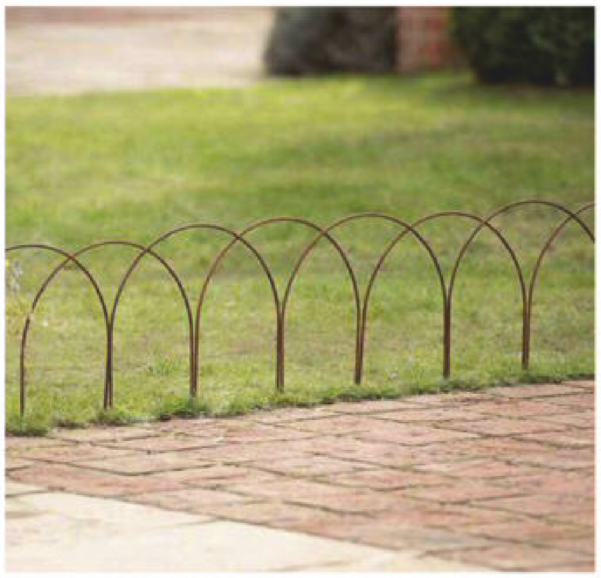
ELEGANT
Campanula Garden Border Edging
£10.99 for a 60cm section, Waitrose,
01344 578811, waitrosegarden.com



RUSTIC
Traditional Stone Border Edging,
£9.95 for 45cm section, GardenStone,
01978 711017, gardenstone.co.uk



ECO
EcoLat Garden Edging, grey,
£70 for a 25m roll, The Garden Range,
thegardenrange.co.uk



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Book reviews, reader offers, back issues, crossword

Gestalten's *The Gardens of Eden*, reviewed on page 116, challenges the norms of garden design and the urban landscape.

DAVID HEATHCOCK

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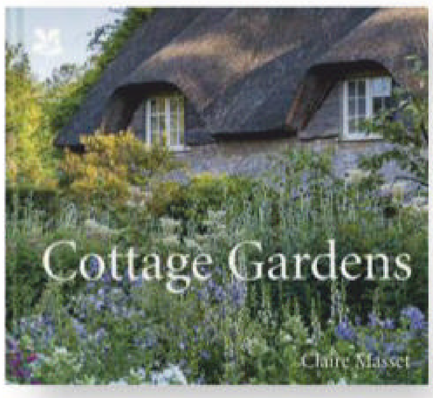
BOOK REVIEWS



COTTAGE GARDENS (NATIONAL TRUST)

by Claire Masset

Pavilion Books, £14.99,
ISBN 978-1911358923

A picture-book pretty appreciation of an enduringly popular garden style, underpinned with a solid foundation of sensible and knowledgeable advice.

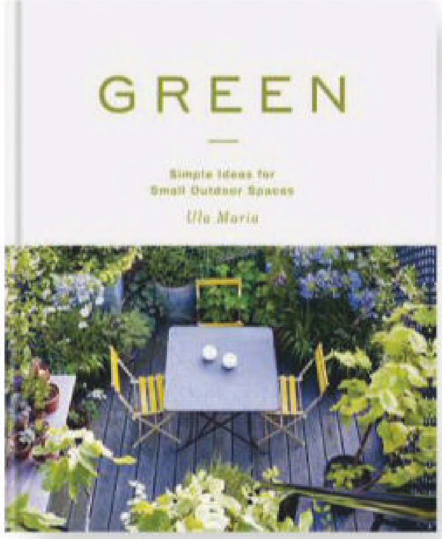
Reviewer Jodie Jones is a garden writer.

Who doesn't love a cottage garden? Its origins may lie in the harsh, hand-to-mouth reality of our genuinely self-sufficient ancestors, but this bucolic embodiment of the Good Life, where beauty and utility combine to romantic effect, has always had a powerful hold on our national psyche. Over the past few weeks the lure of a simpler and gentler way of life has only got stronger, making now the perfect time for this National Trust publication.

It isn't the first, and certainly won't be the last book on the subject, but it is a worthwhile addition to the genre. Author Claire Masset writes well and with the assurance that comes from being an experienced gardener herself. Her National Trust remit gives her the chance to showcase some gorgeous examples, including Hill Top, the Cumbrian farmhouse immortalised in Beatrix Potter's classic children's book illustrations, and the garden at Monk's House in East Sussex that captivated Virginia and Leonard Woolf.

Alongside charming tales of Medieval housewives growing hollyhocks by the house to combat rising damp, and Victorian aristocrats indulging in a fantasy of rural life, is an assessment of Marjory Fish's modern cottage garden at East Lambrook Manor, and the late Christopher Lloyd's creation at Great Dixter (not itself a National Trust property), which Masset describes as a cottage garden on the grandest scale. 'It is far too artistic and adventurous to classify as a real cottage garden, but it is nonetheless inspired by many traditional cottage garden elements.'

Those elements, including pots, topiary, gates and walls, are all briefly discussed. Chris Lacey's photographs support the texts with images as ethereal and evocative as you could wish for, and there is also a seasonal round-up of signature plants, which, although inevitably far from exhaustive, is at least a good starting point for anyone tempted to create their own cottage garden.



GREEN: SIMPLE IDEAS FOR SMALL OUTDOOR SPACES

by Ula Maria,

Mitchell Beazley, £20,
ISBN 978-1784726010

A must for apprehensive city gardeners and for anyone wanting to make the most out of their outdoor space, no matter how small it might be.

Reviewer Katie Dutton is editorial assistant at Gardens Illustrated.

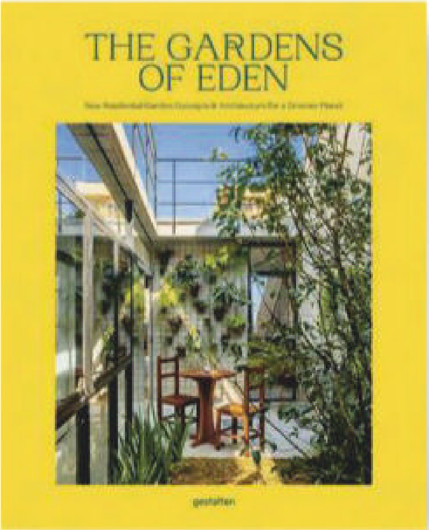
Garden designer and landscape architect, Ula Maria, grew up in the rural Lithuanian countryside, spending her time as a child watering tomatoes, collecting berries and swimming in the local river. It wasn't until she moved to a flat in London that she realised quite how lucky she had been. It is perhaps this nostalgic connection to nature that has contributed to her string of garden design awards since being named RHS Young Designer of the Year in 2017.

Now with her own established garden design practice, Ula has set about making outdoor spaces as wild and nourishing as the garden of her childhood. Not even cramped city courtyards, balconies and roof terraces can quell Ula's positive approach to gardening. There is no problem too big, or too small, shall we say? In fact, throughout *Green*, Ula proposes the positives of smaller gardens over sprawling spaces; they're easier to manage, more economical to maintain and achievable by all. Even a view from a window can count. She encourages us to think of windows as picture frames; filling the view with blooming flowers or luscious foliage for a green fix even from indoors.

Small garden case studies make up most of the book, with contributions from other young designers, such as Jack Wallington and Adolfo Harrison, as well as Ula herself. There's a recurring theme in the gardens; often they spill into the home and vice versa, creating an extra room and an all-encompassing natural space. There are also handy style pointers throughout, such as colour schemes, and how to make a small space feel bigger (surprisingly, a large statement piece of furniture will do the trick), as well as a guide at the back to plants that work well in small spaces.

Flicking through it feels almost as enjoyable and relaxing as sitting in the garden, and no matter how small that garden is Ula will help you see it's bright side.

BOOK REVIEWS



THE GARDENS OF EDEN
by Abbye Churchill
(ed Gestalten)

Gestalten, £35,
ISBN 978-3899559903

A handsome coffee-table book crammed with stunning photographs of innovative garden design for greener urban and domestic life.

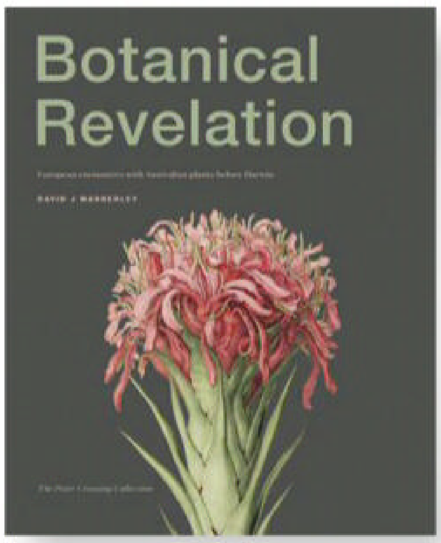
Alice Vincent is an author and gardening journalist.

As we all learn to appreciate the green spaces we have access to more, this new book could not be better timed, with a handsome collection of 23 swoon-inducing private gardens, smatterings of encouragement to participate in more community-focussed, family-friendly and sustainable growing and gardener profiles. It offers plenty of dreamy destinations.

Pulled together by Abbye Churchill for architecture and culture publisher Gestalten, *The Gardens of Eden* aspires to inspire its reader to challenge the norms of domestic garden design and green up our urban landscapes. The book's curation is its best asset: the sprawl of jaw-dropping gardens ranges from a clever ginnel of a living wall in Sydney to a surface-of-Mars-like creation on Chile's rocky northern coast. Courtesy of stunning photography, we are allowed to peer over the fences of natural sauna ponds in the Netherlands and minimalist native gardens in California. Each garden is given a lively and informative-enough profile, with plant types and some tips to borrow and adopt in your own plot.

The Gardens of Eden is notably aspirational. Even a tiny, charming front garden in Peckham, south London, cost £14,000 to design (details on how are scant); a low-maintenance garden of an Italian holiday home demands four hours of attention a week to the tune of £5,000 a year. These details are smuggled into box-outs.

The book includes interviews with the people making these changes, such as Annie Novak, who set up community roof gardens that gaze out at Manhattan's skyline, or Lauri Krantz, whose hopeful wild and organic edible growing is transforming the gardens of LA's hoi polloi (Katy Perry has one). Thereare brilliant ideas here, some of which we can include in our own gardens and some of which we can only dream about.



BOTANICAL REVELATION: EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS WITH AUSTRALIAN PLANTS BEFORE DARWIN
by David J Mabberley

NewSouth Books, £51.95
ISBN 978-1742236476

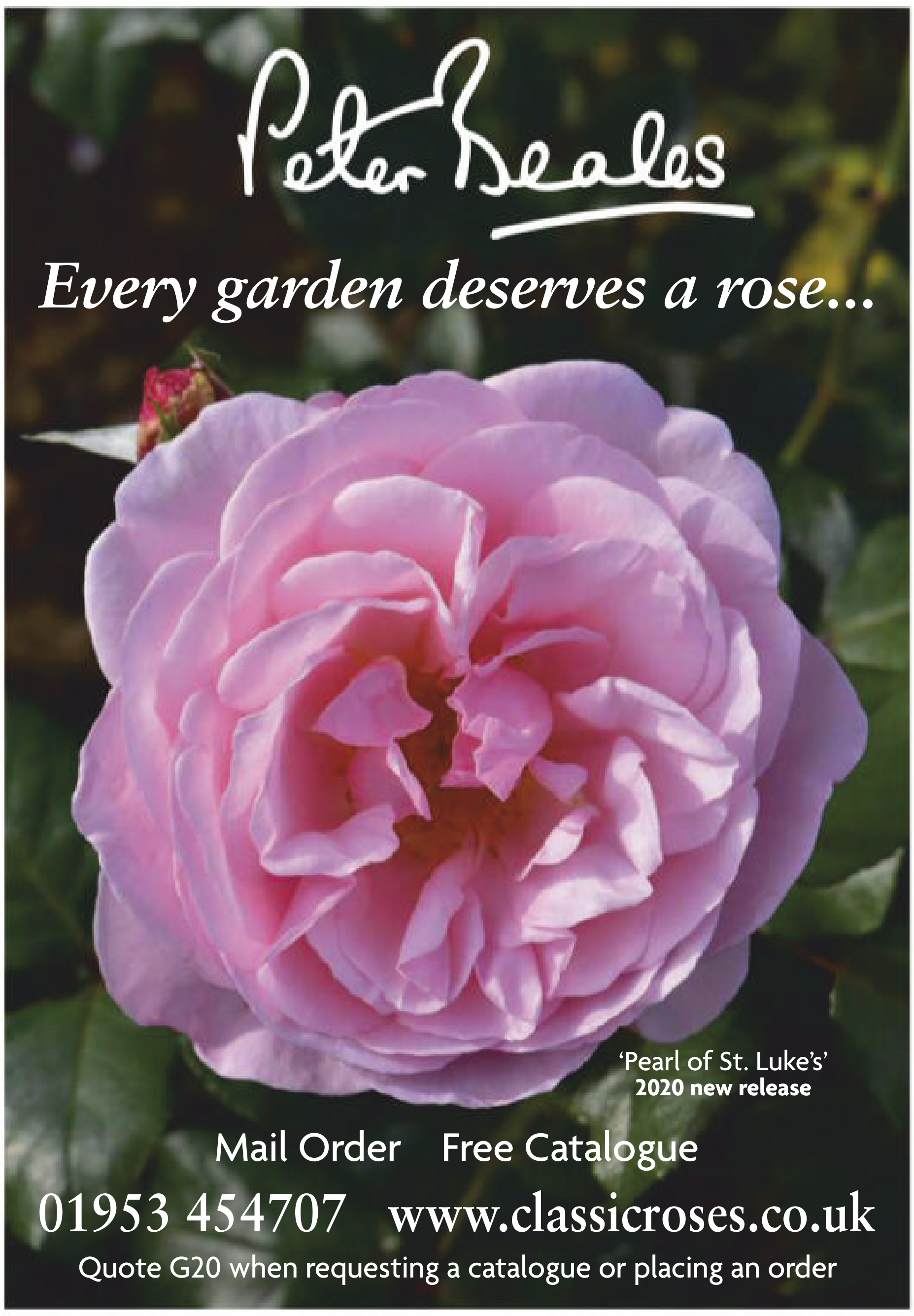
A lavish, scholarly book that looks at the work of the European botanical pioneers who first discovered the plants of Australasia.

Reviewer Rory Dusoir is a Kew-trained gardener and writer.

Botanical Revelation is a hugely impressive endeavour by renowned academic and field botanist David Mabberley, a name familiar to all students of botany for his standard reference work *The Plant Book.* His latest work draws heavily (but by no means exclusively) on Peter Crossing's globally important collection of antiquarian books and botanical paintings, and as such includes facsimiles of a good deal of previously unpublished source material.

The story he tells is both minutely detailed and of huge weight. The adventures of Joseph Banks, James Cook, William Dampier et al, in Australasia have had vast geo-political consequences, but the author also rightly focuses on the impact to contemporary culture and imagination of exposure to Australia's flora and fauna, the 'otherness' of which was a huge stimulus to European science and horticulture, culminating in the theory of evolution. The influence of the European discovery of Australia on gardening in the west has been somewhat eclipsed by the subsequent exploration of China, and as such is in danger of being overlooked in modern accounts of plant hunting. This book firmly re-establishes its importance. It also graphically brings to the forefront the centrality of botany and of botanical illustration to the story of European colonialism.

Botanical Revelation is not light reading. The book is so densely packed with knowledge and incident that you may need a large pot of coffee and the company of several reference books to make the most of it. But the text is leavened unstintingly with botanical illustrations (the beautifully thorough work of Ferdinand Bauer being a highlight) and with facsimiles of historical herbarium specimens, which bring a particular immediacy to the account; all efforts to delve into this book will be more than amply repaid.



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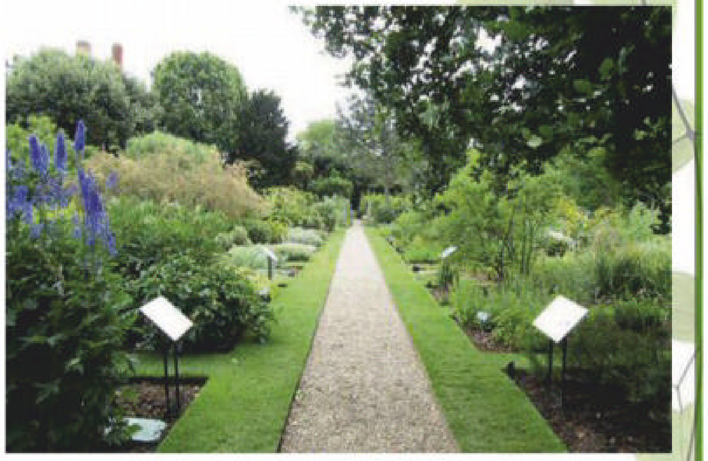

Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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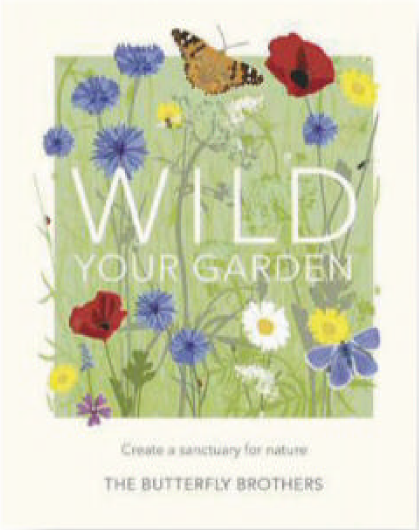


WILD YOUR GARDEN

by Jim and Joel Ashton

DK, £14.99,
ISBN 978-0241435816

Learn how to turn your outdoor space into a haven for wildlife with easy-to-follow projects from The Butterfly Brothers.

Reviewer Catherine Smalley is a freelance writer and gardener

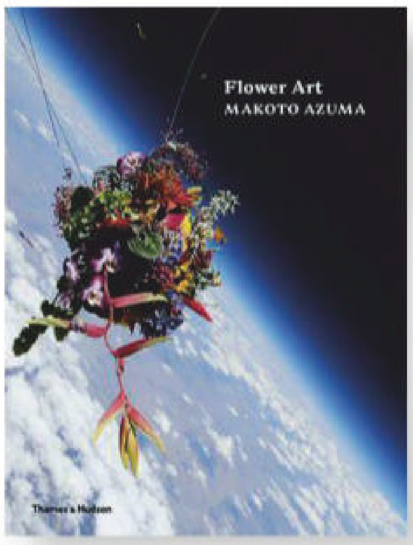
The UK is estimated to have lost 97 per cent of its meadows and at least a quarter of a million miles of hedgerow since the Second World War. It's easy to feel despondent when faced with statistics like these, but this book offers a ray of hope, explaining how, as individuals, wildlife gardening is our most powerful tool for increasing biodiversity.

Wildlife gardeneing experts Jim and Joel Ashton (aka The Butterfly Brothers) draw on their 15 years of experience in rewilding domestic plots to put forward practical advice on how to transform your garden into a sanctuary for nature. You'll learn how to plant a native hedge, where to site a nectar border, when to mow a meadow and why building a pond is the best thing you can do for wildlife at home.

But *Wild Your Garden* isn't just for those planning an entire garden redesign. I was pleased to read that the brothers warn against the 'rip it out and start again philosophy', instead encouraging us to appreciate the established trees, shrubs and climbers already offering a habitat to birds and insects, and the lawns that often contain wildflowers if only we would let them grow a little longer.

Smaller projects, such as creating a container pond or building a bird box, sit alongside more ambitious undertakings, such as planting a coppice belt or building a limestone bank, meaning there's something for everyone. Straightforward instructions and inspiring before-and-after photographs are backed up with detailed information on exactly which animal species you will be attracting, and the long plant list at the back of the book, arranged by project and garden situation, is a really useful addition.

At a time when we face unwieldy environmental issues, The Butterfly Brothers provide a welcome reminder that there are still many simple ways we can help local wildlife in our own gardens.



FLOWER ART

by Makoto Azuma

Thames & Hudson, £39.95,
ISBN 978-0500210291

A beautiful and poignant book that documents the brilliant and bizarre work of virtuoso Japanese florist Makoto Azuma.

Rosanna Morris is a freelance writer.

Few florists are as out there as Makoto Azuma. To call him a florist, seems understated. His work is mesmerising, mystical and sometimes quite literally out of this world. His sculptures, installations and interactive events seem unreal and the photographs that capture them are so hard to believe you begin to wonder if they were Photoshopped. Was a bouquet really sent into outer space? A bonsai tree suspended in the middle of a desert? A sculpture comprising 9,000 bird-of-paradise flowers built on a beach on the Japanese island of Okinawa? They all happened.

In this 120-page book, Azuma shares his processes with us through astonishing photographs by botanical photographer Shunsuke Shiiki, who records Makoto's feats in all their glory, most blown up large to full page. The small amount of text is dotted about as paragraphs, giving brief descriptions of some of the projects. The title 'flower art' underplays the content of this book and does not prepare you for what you will see as you turn the pages. This is no mere flower arranging – this is alchemy, architecture and floristry all wrapped into some other-worldly wizardry.

The book gives us a bit of biography – Azuma, who hails from the Japanese island of Kyushu, started working part-time in a flower shop when he was 21, going on to open the haute couture florist atelier Jardins des Fleurs in Tokyo in 2002 (now relocated). Since then, he has experimented with daring and radical floral artworks around the world, from London to São Paulo. In recent years, he has been developing projects that place flowers in inhospitable places – space, the depths of the ocean, salt lakes and in permafrost.

His work also explores the connection between humans and flowers, as simple as handing out flowers to people and photographing them holding them. These are the images that gives this book its beautiful poignancy.

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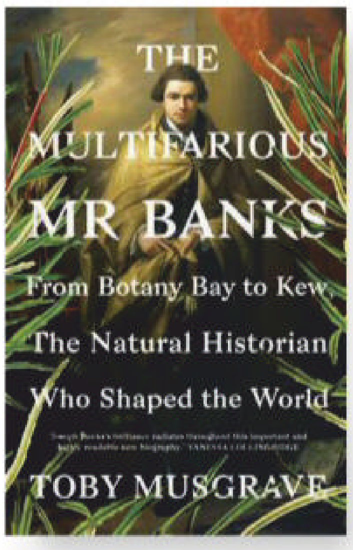


THE MULTIFARIOUS MR BANKS: FROM BOTANY BAY TO KEW, THE NATURAL HISTORIAN WHO SHAPED THE WORLD

by Toby Musgrave

Yale University Press, £25
ISBN 978-0300223835

A scholarly and detailed exposition of the great achievements of Sir Joseph Banks a leading scientific figure of the English Enlightenment.

Reviewer Hannah Gardner is a horticulturist and garden writer.

Multifarious is an uncommon and slightly mannered word that neatly reflects the Georgian time frame for this engaging account of the adventurous life of Joseph Banks (1743-1820). Musgrave delves deep into the diverse interests and significant scientific achievements of this charismatic natural historian. A botanical trailblazer, he was the first European to make an extensive study of the natural history and anthropology of Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia.

Born into an aristocratic family, Banks developed an early interest in the nature. His private income supported his botanical studies; while his initiative carved out opportunities for extensive natural history studies. He was to become the father of modern plant hunting.

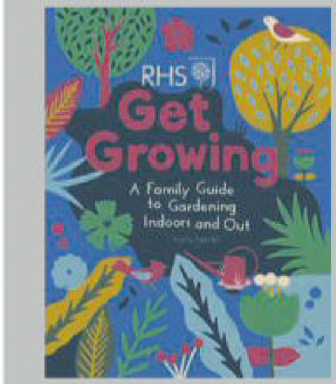
Fascinating chronological chapters detail voyage preparations, collecting techniques and the illustrious botanical networks of the day, Linnaeus was a much-revered but elderly scholar; and so it fell on his pupil Dr Solander to join the expedition through the largely unchartered waters of the South Seas. Banks undertook several epic voyages, most famously with the dynamic Lieutenant James Cook aboard HMS *Endeavour*.

This lively and even-handed account is well annotated, drawing heavily on correspondence and travel journals from the early Newfoundland expedition, the great circumnavigation aboard HMS *Endeavour* (from which Banks returned to a hero's welcome) and his later Icelandic voyage. Back in England Banks immersed himself in progressive scientific projects emerging as perhaps the most influential scientist of his time and the longest serving President of The Royal Society. Embracing the inclusive spirit of the age, he was more interested in the advancement of science than personal glory, working hard to expand the remit of the Royal Gardens at Kew and create the world's leading research-orientated botanic garden.

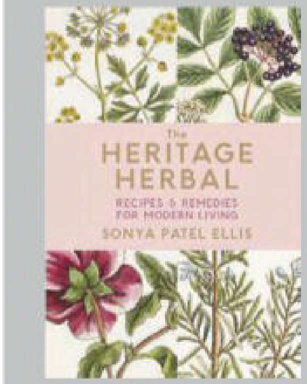
Other books

This month's picks have ideas on how to nurture the gardening bug in children and how to attract wildlife into your garden

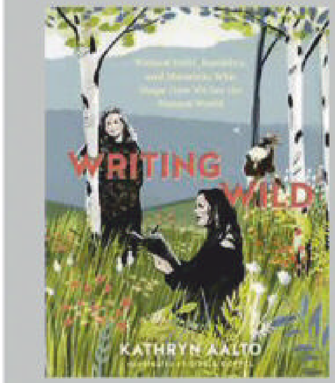
BEE GARDEN
by Elke Schwarzer
Haynes, £12.99,
ISBN 978-1785216961
An expert manual from biologist Elke Schwarzer on what attracts bees and keeps them happy, with plant profiles and information on 16 species of bee.



RHS GET GROWING: A FAMILY GUIDE TO GARDENING INDOORS AND OUT
by Holly Farrell,
Frances Lincoln, £14.99,
ISBN 978-0711251076
Inspire children to get gardening with this fun and accessible new book from the RHS.



THE HERITAGE HERBAL: RECIPES & REMEDIES FOR MODERN LIVING
by Sonya Patel Ellis,
British Library Publishing, £16.99,
ISBN 978-0712353809
Botanical recipes for teas, wines, jams, soups, bath oils, soap and more



WRITING WILD
by Kathryn Aalto,
Timber Press, £18.99,
ISBN 978-1604699272
Celebrating 25 female wordsmiths who have also made significant waves in the world of nature.

THE FIVE MINUTE GARDEN
by Laetitia Maklouf,
Pavilion Books, £9.99,
ISBN 978-1911358916
On the basis that one small job every day makes gardening seem far less daunting, this book is filled with five-minute activities that will work wonders.

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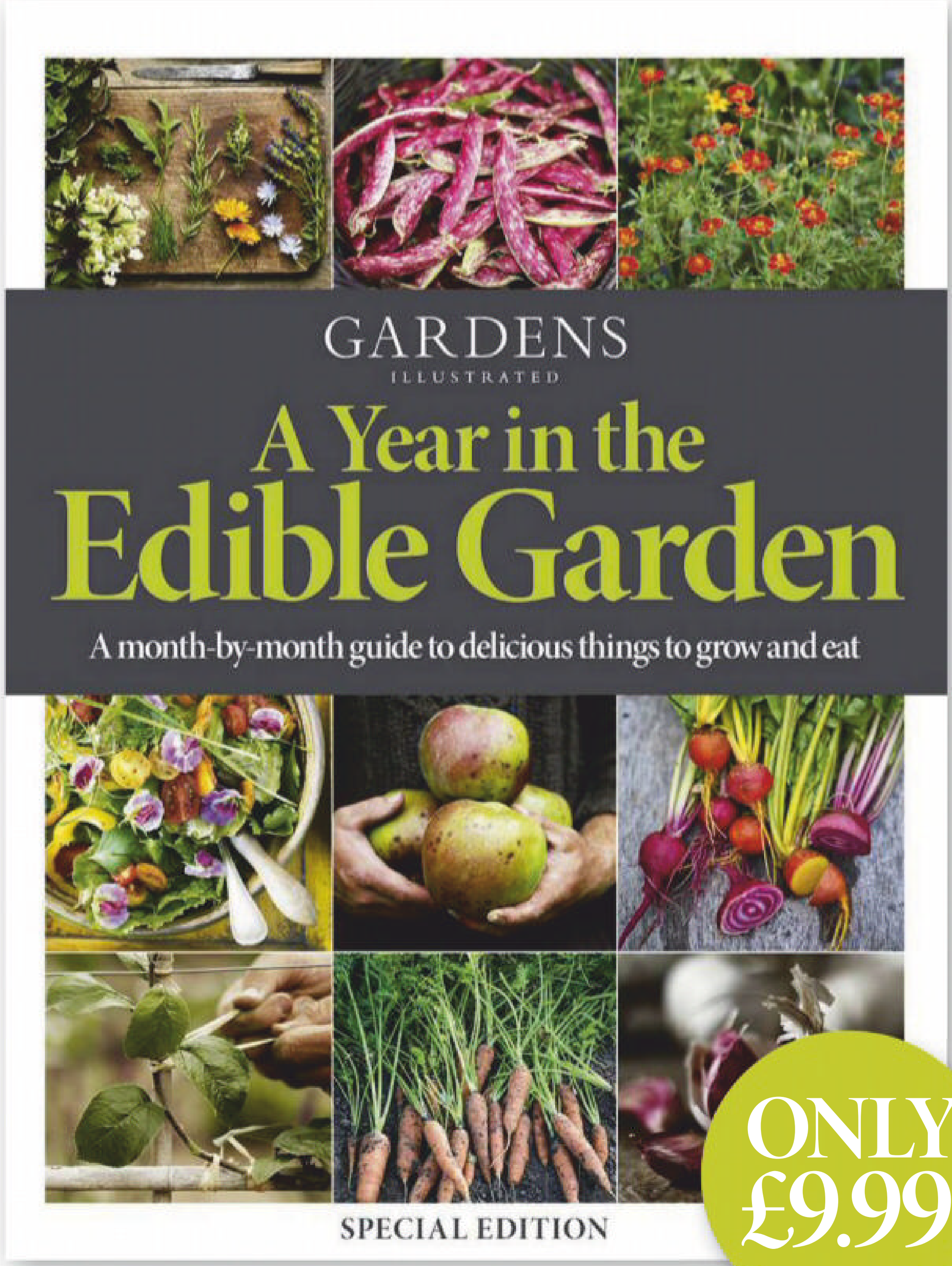

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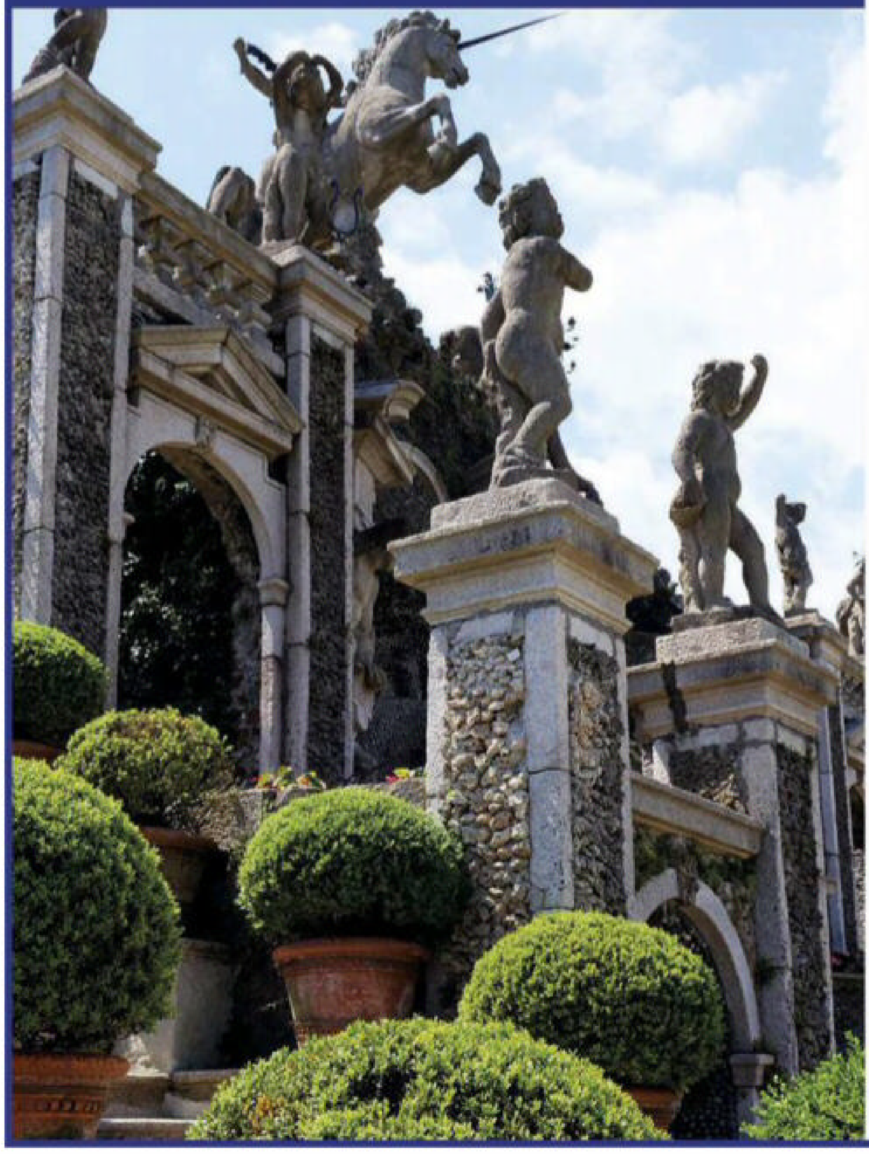

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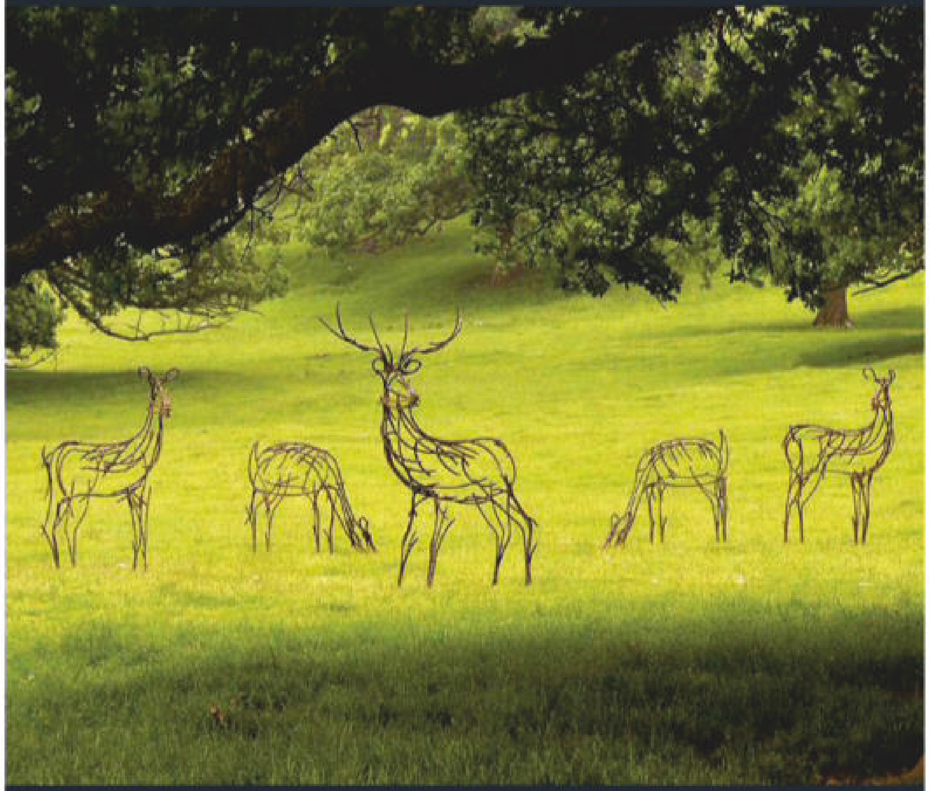

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Strawberry 'Malwina'.

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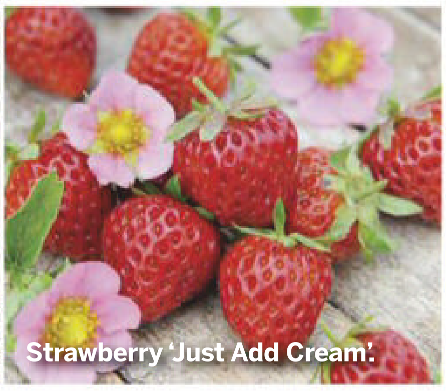
Strawberry 'Just Add Cream'.

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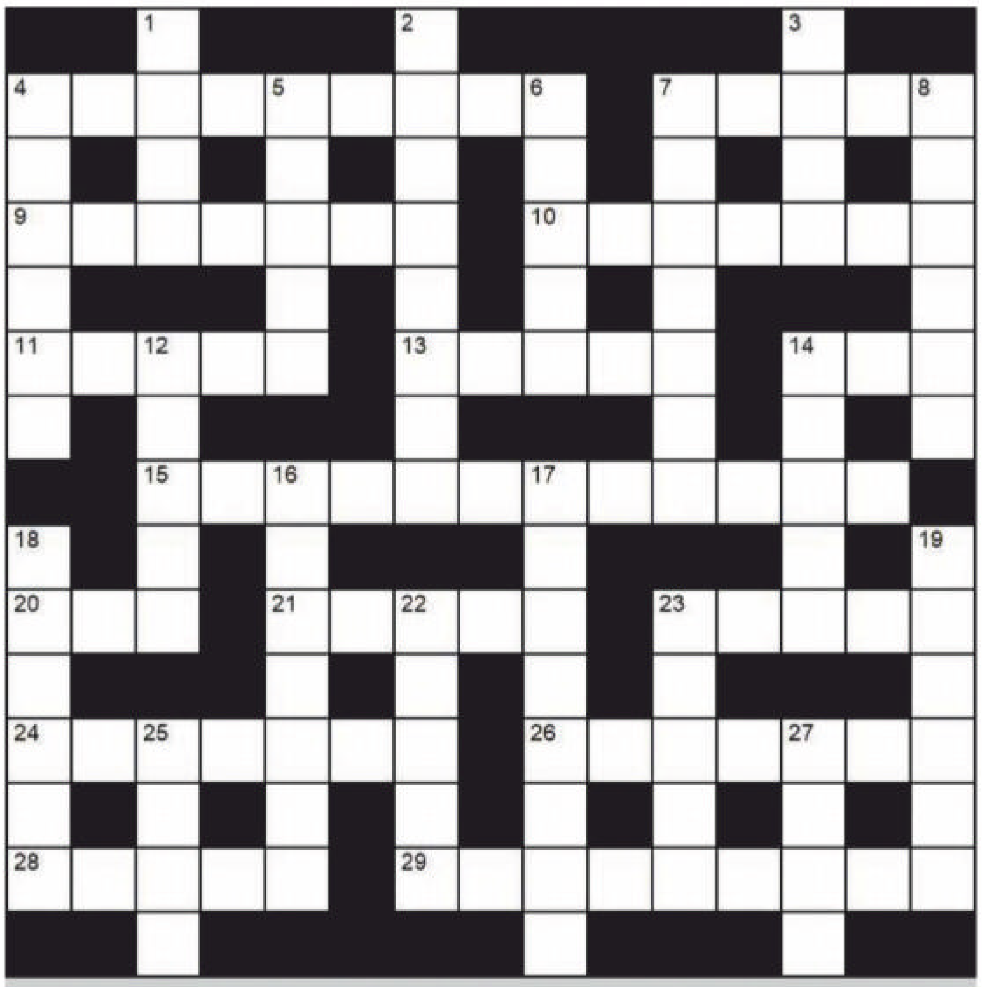

ACROSS

4 Common name for shrub in *Pyracantha* genus (9)
7 Begonia with huge white flowers, tipped pink – for a movie star photo? (3-2)
9 Person who talks at length… about a wild rose? (7)
10 A *Filipendula rubra* with rose-pink flower spikes – part Newhaven (US) tagete (7)
11 Genus of plants commonly called 'Tidy Tips' – in display I arranged (5)
13 A purple-blue lavender with white bracts – used to decorate one's head (5)
14 Tom, for instance, might be deterred by *Coleus caninus*! (3)
15 Californian poppy genus – Liz chose cash conversion (12)
20 Garden plot (3)
21 A *Pelargonium* cultivar – fit for a monarch (5)
23 Pansy-like flower plucked by a musician? (5)
24 Contain unusual… bolt-resistant Florence fennel (7)
26 Father confused cumin for genus of 'switch grass' (7)
28 A series of *Agapanthus* – 'Tempest'? (5)
29 A *Nicotiana* mix of pink /white flowers… public excitement? (9)

DOWN

1 Genus of 'cuckoo pint' and 'lords-and-ladies' (4)
2 Genus of grey mould fungus – it rots by twisting (8)
3 Plant stalk housing insects (4)
4 Genus of giant fennel – earful, possibly (6)
5 The lime tree genus – in tormentil I assume (5)
6 Latin term indicating 'snowy white' – a vine, maybe (5)
7 Dwarf rhododendron with bright pink flowers – and a type of duck (7)
8 Flowers, etc factories? (6)
12 Surrender produce from vegetable plot (5)
14 A Marx brother's fuchsia-coloured *Hippeastrum* (5)
16 Thistle genus – cum iris, perhaps (7)
17 A dwarf pea plant – small beer? (4,4)
18 An early button Brussels sprout – you can count on it! (6)
19 A dwarf rhododendron with dark red flowers – and Bizet opera (6)
22 Increases in height (5)
23 Periwinkle genus (5)
25 A series of *Phlox paniculata* – none affected (4)
27 Coconut fibre used as peat substitute (4)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

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ACROSS 1 Garlic **5** Cytisus **9** Salt **10** Calla **11** Mint **12** Phormium **13/28** Early bird **14** Elymus **16** Sapling **19** Signals **22** Trails **24** Diana **26** Crocuses **29** Taiyo **30** Carl **31** Lunaria **32** Reseda.

DOWN 2 Anaphalis **3** Lythrum **4** Cacti **5** Calamus **6** Tease **7** Samurai **8** Sandy **15/25** Sea aster **17** Pot **18** Golden rod **20** Gladdon **21** Succisa **23** Aruncus **24** Drill **27** Odour.

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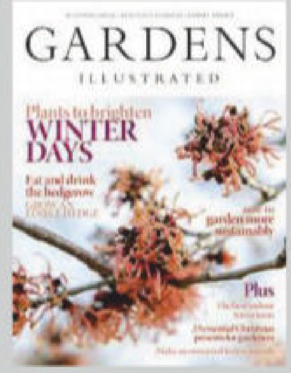

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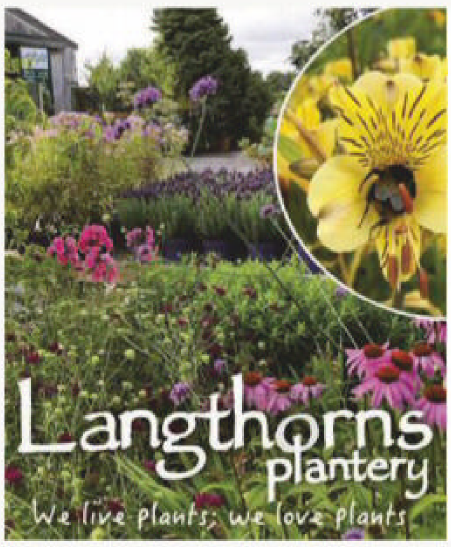

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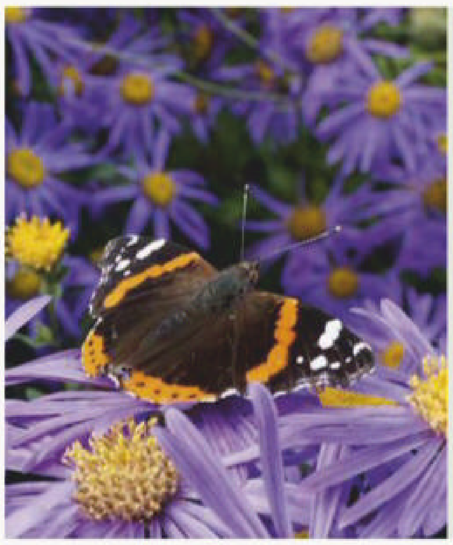

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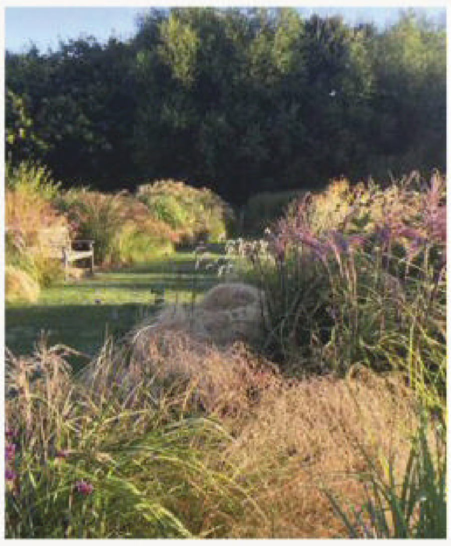

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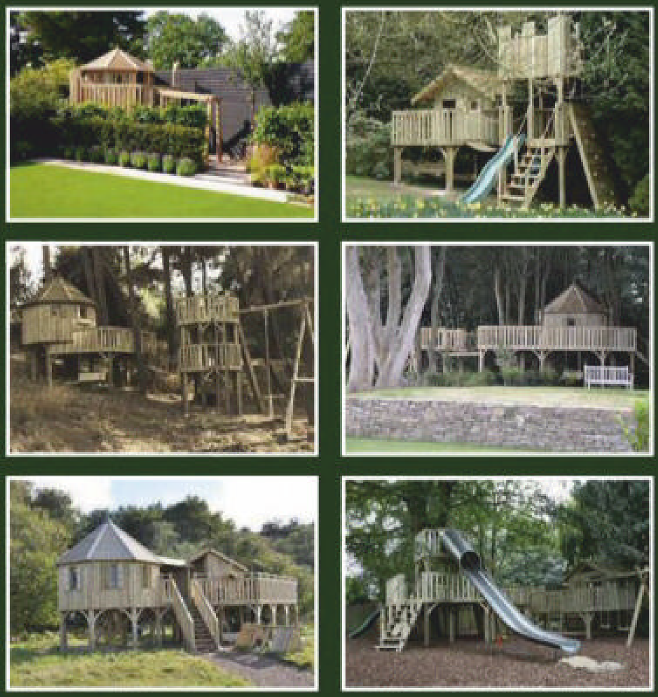

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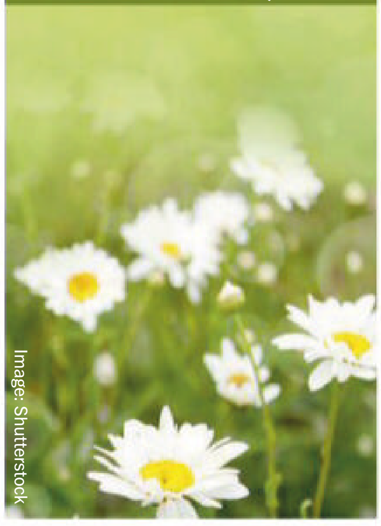

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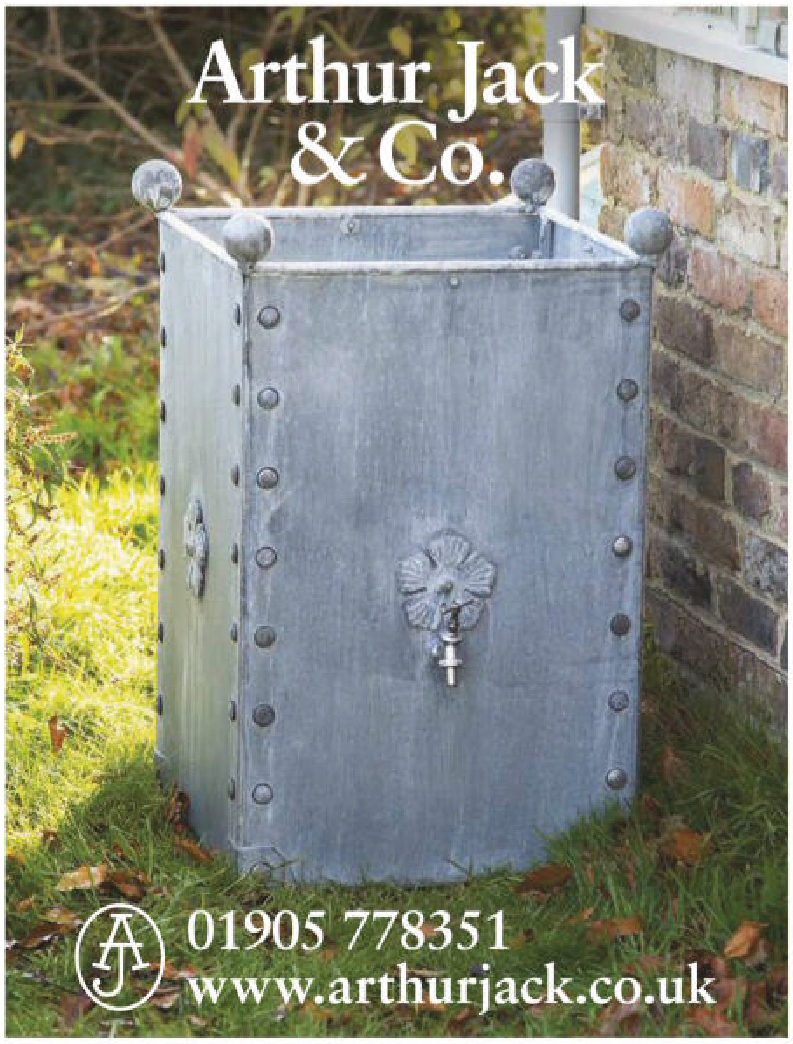

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HOUSEPLANTS

Saxifraga stolonifera

The rise and rise of a prolific and proliferate species

WORDS **JANE PERRONE** ILLUSTRATION **PATRICK MORGAN**

Searching for the roots of my houseplant obsession takes me back to my primary school, which boasted a grimy conservatory full of towering cacti and a library draped in yellowing spider plants festooned with babies. My friend Ruth and I must have shown some kind of flair for horticulture as we were let out of maths to water the spider plants back to life. It may have stunted my understanding of arithmetic, but it did set me up for a lifelong love of gardening. In turn, the spider plants responded to our care by producing many babies at the end of long stalks I later learned to call inflorescences.

There was one plant that always caught my attention in the greenhouse: it grew everywhere, pressing its succulent stems up against the glass and pushing its way through cracks in the floor. From a distance, it appeared to have frilly margins to its fleshy leaves. On closer examination, the frills resolved themselves into tiny plantlets that dropped to the ground at the slightest disturbance, rooting readily into any morsel of soil they found.

Both the spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*) and the Mexican hat plant (*Kalanchoe daigremontiana*) lodged in my brain as examples of that blessing wrapped in a curse: plants that reproduce so endlessly you cannot possibly find enough friends to adopt all their babies. Almost all of these plants have been called by the catch-all common name mother of thousands, but my favourite of these prolific species is the strawberry saxifrage (*Saxifraga stolonifera*), a rosette-forming plant with scalloped, hairy leaves with a tracery of silver along the veins. Mature specimens trail an array of plantlets on reddish, wiry stems up to 60cm long. As the Latin and common names suggest, this plant vegetatively propagates itself by sending out stolons, also known as runners, just like its edible namesake.

Strawberry saxifrage was a popular plant of my childhood, and is rightly beginning to regain popularity. It's easy going, looks pretty in a hanging pot, and will live just as happily as groundcover in a sheltered spot outdoors as it will on a shelf in indirect light indoors. The strawberry saxifrage is native to China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan, and, according to the Plants For A Future (PFAF) database of edible plants (pfaf.org), the leaves can be eaten either cooked or raw in salads.

If your cacti and orchids turn to mush as a result of heavy-handed watering, you may find a strawberry saxifrage copes better, as it likes to remain damp in spring and summer. You'll need to ease back on the water come winter, allowing the surface to dry out between waterings. This is one plant that doesn't seem to thrive in terracotta pots, preferring the moisture-retentive environs of a plastic or glazed pot. Upright stems of small, white, butterfly-like flowers appear in summer, although some prefer to remove these, driving the plant to focus on foliage.

We are not blessed with many cultivars of the strawberry saxifrage, but those there are should be sought out. The star performer is 'Tricolor', with leaves irregularly edged in cream and tinged lipstick pink. 'Maroon Beauty' has larger flowers and a mahogany tinge to the green leaves. There is another cultivar with even larger cream markings, called 'Shichihenge', but I have never seen it for sale: it seems only to exist online in photos. No matter, because I love the saxifrages I already have, and once I run out of friends who want a plantlet, I shall simply let my plants grow a thicket of runners until they resemble a school of jellyfish.

Propagating from stolons

Stolons are known as runners because they do just that: running along until they find a suitable pocket of soil, then rooting into it until a baby plant is established. It's easy enough to exploit this habit to make new plants: if there's enough bare soil in the pot on the parent plant, simply peg a plantlet on to damp compost a short distance along the runner with an unfurled paperclip or florist's mossing pin until it has formed enough roots to live independently. Or fill another small pot with houseplant compost and place alongside the parent to act as a home for the new baby. □

Jane Perrone is a garden writer

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